What shall we do in Ireland?

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

BY

WALLACE CARTER.

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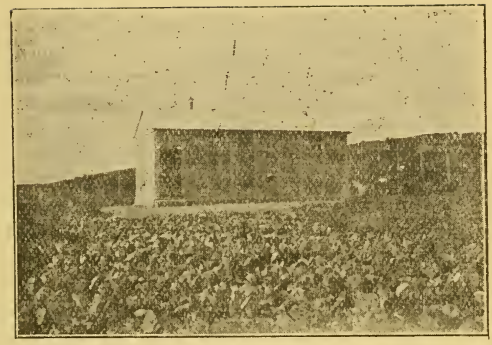

How we Govern Ireland.

A fortified Police Hut capable of holding six men.

The profits, if any, on the sale of this pamphlet will be given to the fund on behalf of the Evicted Tenants on the De Freyne Estate.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGES.
INTRODUCTION	5— 9
CHAPTER II—The Land War..	10—20
,, III—The Congested Districts ..	21—33
,, IV—The Problem Solved	34—45
,, V—The History of The De Freyne Dispute	46—53
,, VI—The Case for Lord De Freyne	54—63
,, VII—Through The De Freyne Estate	64—78
,, VIII—Evictions..	79—93
,, IX—Observations	94—98

INTRODUCTION.

What is sometimes vaguely known as the Irish Question has had many phases. It is not always that the most important comes to the front. During the last few years, however, Irish questions have undergone a considerable change. To-day the question which most concerns Irishmen is not, as many Englishmen seem to think, Home Rule, but land. On this question the tenant farmers of Unionist Ulster march in line with Nationalist Ireland. While we in England are still arguing about Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bills, Irishmen, with an amount of practical common-sense with which they are seldom credited, while not for a moment modifying their demands for legislative independence are uniting to secure the immemediate settlement of the land troubles. This is a subject which gets nearer home to the hearts of the people than any other question can do. Unionist and Home Rulers have joined hands and are at one as to the cause of their troubles, and the way out of them. What these troubles are, and the way Irishmen would find a way out of them, I shall describe in detail later on. It is sufficient to say here that Irish people are determined to put an end to the present condition of land tenure which has drained the country of its resources and driven their sons into exile.

Here surely is an object lesson for Englishmen. For years we have been urged not to pay any attention to the Nationalists' demands, because Ulster, the seat of industry,

prosperity, and Protestantism, was against them. But to-day Ulster demands as strongly as Connaught the solution of the land question. Mr. T. W. Russell, the only Unionist of any commanding ability which Ireland has produced of late years, is at one with Mr. William O'Brien as to the lines on which that solution should be framed. Never in the history of any popular reform has public opinion been so thoroughly united as Irish opinion is on the land question. It is something entirely new even in the strange story of Ireland.

My object in writing is to draw the attention of my countrymen to the important changes which have come over the Irish question. What I have written is the result of a deep devotion to the cause of Ireland, and a careful study of the various problems which vex that distressed country.

In the province of Connaught it is possible to see within a mile of each other, the curse and the cure of the Irish land system. While there I made it my business to gather information from everybody who could throw any light on the various aspects of the problem.

In the struggle which has been going on between Lord De Freyne and his tenants, we have a typical case of the differences which divide landlord and tenant, and which create the Irish question. On the neighbouring Dillon estate can be seen the successful solution of these troubles, an estate which was once the scene of continual warfare, but is now the home of peace and contentment. Thus we have the main facts of the Irish land problem and the remedy, reduced to the limits of two counties. It seemed to me that if these facts were placed before the English people it might help them to understand the

Irish land question, rather more clearly than they have hitherto been able. I have, therefore, tried to describe the position of affairs in these counties as simply, fully and accurately as possible.

I have given the case for Lord De Freyne, as it was given me by his agent. I have described the position of the tenants as I saw it, and as hundreds of them described it to me. As my sympathies were with the tenants I took special care to test their statements by enquiry from every official source which was open to me. What appeared to be unreliable I have suppressed. The case for Lord De Freyne I have not troubled to investigate. I give in its entirety the story told me by his agent, and repeated by a neighbouring landlord. This chapter has been carefully revised by the gentleman referred to. Some of their statements made to me have been withdrawn, and new facts added. I have allowed them to alter their story in any way they wished. I accept it as the honest opinion of honest men, and present it along with the case for the tenants, leaving my readers to draw their own conclusions.

On the Dillon estate I had the generous assistance of the Government officials and the delight of interviewing numbers of the people. Here, again, I wrote of things as I saw and heard them. I am well aware that the details of the work of the Congested District Board are open to obvious criticism, but I do not think it necessary to enter into it here. I am only anxious to show what CAN be done to improve the conditions of the people.

What I have written will be of little value to the political expert, for whom these chapters are not intended. I have purposely

refrained from entering into the details of what men on either side think should be the plan of land settlement in Ireland. Such matters can be safely left with our statesmen, when the people have decided upon the principles which are to guide them. The man in the street, for whom I have written, will never trouble his head with the incidents of any Irish Land Bill. But he is prepared, or he will have to be, to decide upon the main lines of the policy which this country shall adopt in governing Ireland, and the attitude we are to assume in deciding between the men who cultivate the soil of Ireland, and the men who own it.

I hope that the following Chapters, which were published in the "Lincoln Leader" in the course of my journalistic work for that paper, though lacking the precision of more leisured writing, may be of some little assistance in helping my fellow countrymen to understand the Irish land question. When these chapters were written the Land Conference had not met. The report of that Conference, signed by the chosen representatives of the tenants and the landlords, has produced an extraordinary situation. For the first time in the history of Ireland landlords and tenants, the English garrison and the Irish people, have agreed upon the lines on which the land question should be setttled. It now only remains for the Imperial Parliament to translate the principles embodied in the Land Conference report into an Act. But in so doing it is most important that every care should be taken to ensure that the settlement shall, as far as possible, be permanently satisfactory to all concerned. This cannot be secured unless the question is thoroughly understood both inside and outside the House of Com-

mons. If what I have written is of any assistance in this direction I shall be abundantly satisfied.

In conclusion, I must express my grateful thanks to a number of Irish gentlemen, who most kindly and patiently assisted me in various ways.

To the Right Hon. Horace Plunkett; Mr. Doarn, of the Congested Districts Board, and Messrs. Kelly and Haddock, two of his courteous assistants; Mr. S. Woulfe Flanagan, Lord De Freyne's agent.

To Mr. John Dillon, M.P., Mr. William O'Brien, M.P., Mr. Michael Davitt, Mr. John Fitz Gibbon, C.C., Mr. Patrick Webb, C.C., Mr. Patrick Conry, C.C., Mr. Denis Johnston.

G. WALLACE CARTER.

Lincoln, March, 1903.

II.

THE LAND WAR.

If the average Englishman is to understand the Irish land question, he must first of all rid his mind of English ideas. Agriculture is certainly an important industry in England. But in proportion to the capital and numbers engaged therein, it is by no means the most important. When an English agricultural labourer is dissatisfied with his position and prospects he goes into the nearest manufacturing town, where there is generally a market for his labour. He can, and does, return to his country home at holiday times, so that the break with sentimental attachments is slight, and more than compensated by improved economic conditions which the town affords. In Ireland everything is different. The Irishman who is born on the land, must either find a living on the land or leave his country altogether. Agriculture is practically the only industry. It employs 43.7 per cent. of the entire population, against 16 per cent. in England. Manufactures are so small in Ireland that only 17 per cent. are employed, as against 40 per cent. in the industries of England. It will thus be seen that the prosperity of Ireland depends almost solely on the prosperity of agriculture. Unfortunately, the term prosperity cannot, at present, be associated with farming in Ireland. It is, however, a great mistake to imagine that

prosperity cannot be secured. The conditions of agriculture are in some important respects better in Ireland than in England. In England the difficulty is to keep the people on the land. In Ireland the difficulty is to find land to keep the people on; the land is there, but it wants redistributing. In England we are sadly in need of small holders; in Ireland there are thousands of small holders who, if given a chance, would easily support themselves. The advantages of a peasant proprietorship no longer need arguing; in Ireland there are thousands of peasants ready to become industrious and thrifty proprietors directly the law will allow them. Altogether the conditions of agriculture are such that, when present difficulties have been swept away by the establishment of a universal system of Land Purchase, Ireland would speedily become the most prosperous agricultural country in the world. A people who have clung to the land with such marvellous pertinacity, who have learned to live cheaply, who are wonderfully intelligent, naturally optimistic, and highly moral, need only to be given the necessary opportunities, and they will create a measure of prosperity which would be impossible in other lands.

What is it then that stands in the way of Ireland's happiness? To answer that question is to explain the whole position of Irish land tenure. I will endeavour to do this as simply and briefly as possible. To understand it we must again commence by putting out of our minds any comparisons with the position of agriculturists in England. The relations which exist between landlord and tenant in England are unknown in Ireland. The English landlord owns not only his farm lands, but the farm houses and buildings as well. He makes improvements

and alterations from time to time, and may be described, in many cases, as the father of his tenants, or, at least, as an active partner in their industry. He resides among his people, and their welfare is his welfare and concern. In Ireland everything is the opposite of this. The landlord owns the land only. The buildings upon it are the property of the tenant, constructed by him or his fathers. Such improvements as are made on the farm, are made solely by and at the expense of the tenant. The landlord is a sleeping partner, drawing a regular income from the people, but seldom residing among them, frequently never even visiting his estate, and a complete stranger to his tenants. The only interest the majority of Irish landlords have taken in their estates has been to extract the uttermost farthing of rent from them. As the tenant, by diligent labour and expenditure, has improved the farms the landlord has demanded more and more rent. Is it to be wondered then that friction has been the rule, rather than the exception between landlord and tenant? Imperial Parliament has fully recognised the anomalous position in which the two parties stand, and has frequently stepped in to protect the tenant against the landlord.

In 1881 Mr. Gladstone passed a Land Act, which may be described as the "Bill of Rights" of the Irish tenant. This Act declared that the buildings constructed by the tenant were his own property, over which the landlord had no control, and for which he could not ask rent. It further provided that the rent for the land should, on the application of the tenant, be fixed by Land Commissioners. The Commissioners, in fixing the rent, were not to include tenants' improvements.

Thus it was hoped that the tenant would be protected against unjust landlords. The Commissioners are supposed to inspect the land and assess the rent. The tenant can then go into the Land Court and have the rent fixed according to the valuation. There is a Court of Appeal to which, if not satisfied, either landlord or tenant can go, and demand a re-valuation. To my mind the chief value of this Act is the inalienable right which it established in the tenant's ownership of his buildings, and the valuable precedent for Government control of Irish land. When once it was enacted by law that the Government should step in between landlord and tenant to fix the rent, there could be no logical reason why some day the Government should go one step further, and take over the land altogether, giving the landlord a just equivalent for his rent. The Act of 1881 established not only the tenant's interest, but also the Government interest in the land. In its immediate and practical purposes, however, it is to be feared the Act has failed to accomplish all Mr. Gladstone hoped for. It does not prevent the tenant from being rented for his own improvements. The tenant will tell you to-day that if he improves his land, shows any signs of success, whitewashes his cottage, or makes the place comfortable, it has its effects on the Commissioners' assessment, and up goes the rent. The result is a direct discouragement of all efforts of self-improvement, and a premium is put upon neglect and slovenliness. It very often happens that when a tenant goes into the Land Court his rent is raised. Now the only grounds on which the rent could possibly be raised is on the improvement in the holding, and the only

person who ever improves anything in Ireland is the tenant. On the other hand the landlord does not appreciate having his rent lowered, and he is by no means always willing to accept the valuation of the Commissioners. But the result of an appeal on either side, seldom brings satisfaction. In fact both landlord and tenant mistrust both Commissioners and Land Courts, which, by the way, costs the poor country some £150,000 a year to keep going. Then the landlords have never accepted the creation of joint interest in the land, dual ownership, as established by the Act of 1881. They regard that as the source of all their troubles, so that when in power for a few brief months in 1885, a Conservative Government tried to put an end to this state of things, by allowing a landlord to sell his interest in the land.

But the only person who would, or could, purchase the interest of both landlord and tenant, was the tenant. Thus, the Conservatives found themselves placed in a most unenviable dilemma. They solved the difficulty in the only possible way by passing the famous "Ashbourne Act," which allowed and assisted the tenants to buy out the landlord wherever they could come to mutual terms The object of the framers of the Act was, evidently, to enable a landlord who had troublesome tenants to get rid of them. The landlords did not see that by doing this they were preparing a weapon for their enemies, and placing a premium on "troublesomeness." Tenants only had to make things sufficiently unpleasant for the landlord in order to get rid of him. In fact the Conservative Government of 1885 took another "leap in the dark," the full consequences of which the Irish landlords have only recently realised. But the

Act, having been passed, it was absolutely impossible to go back. The £5,000,000 advanced by the Ashbourne Act, was soon swallowed up. Other Acts, on similar lines, with further grants, became necessary, until now the Government is pledged to advance over £40,000,000, to enable Irish tenants to buy out their landlords, and some 62,241 tenants are purchasing their holdings. It is unnecessary to explain in detail the various Land Purchase Acts. Briefly, they may be described thus: Where a landlord is willing to sell and a tenant is willing to buy, the Government, having satisfied themselves through the Land Commission officials that the farm is security for the sum agreed upon, loan the money for its purchase retaining for a certain period, if necessary, portion of it as a guarantee for its repayment. The sum advanced is repaid by the tenant in half-yearly instalments, which represent principal and interest, the interest under the present law being fixed at 4 per cent. The half-yearly instalments are in all cases considerably less than the half-yearly rents formerly paid. The payment of them is spread over a period of from 49 years, after which the holding becomes the property of the purchasing tenant or his heirs. When the Congested Districts Board intervenes (as in the Dillon Estate) the Board purchases the Estate from the landlord, and afterwards sells to the tenants on very favourable terms. The smaller holdings are enlarged and other valuable assistance given, to the small tenants, so as to afford them an opportunity of starting anew under conditions likely to secure them a successful future. In these cases also the yearly instalments are arranged to run over a considerable period of years, after which the holding becomes the property of the former tenant.

How smoothly and successfully Land Purchase has worked everybody, who knows anything of Ireland, agrees. The tenants secured in their holdings, freed from the fear of the landlord, proud in the possession of their own land have become thrifty, industrious, and contented. What is known as "crime" has vanished, and something approaching prosperity reigns. The working of the Land Purchase Acts have indeed proved a great object lesson in demonstrating the sterling qualities of the Irish people, when placed under decent circumstances. Their honesty and industry cannot be too highly praised. No better evidence of this can be given than the words of the Chief Secretary for Ireland, in the House of Commons, on March 25, 1902. Mr. Wyndham said, "Land Purchase has this merit, that the State has incurred no loss under it, and is, I believe, exposed to no risks. Under the Acts of 1891 and 1896 more than 30,000 purchasers are paying annually £171,214 to the State. I have no case of bad debts to offer." When we remember that a few years ago many of these tenants were on the borders of starvation, at war with their landlords, evicted from their homes, and held down by armed police, the change to their present conditions is simply miraculous. I am convinced from my own observation that the Irish peasant is naturally honest, and given a fair chance will become prosperous and contented. Mr. Wyndham's figures prove all and more than this.

The very success of Land Purchase has produced what some will consider a natural evil. It has created a favoured class among Irish tenants; those, who instead of paying rent, are purchasing their holdings, at less than they formerly rented them for. Side by side with these are tenants whose landlord

will not sell, and who are doomed to go on paying rent in perpetuity, with no hope of materially improving their conditions. As the Purchase Acts stand at present no tenants can participate in their benefits unless the landlord is willing to sell. Is there any wonder that the people rebel against this unjust position of affairs? The fact is, the Acts are a direct encouragement to the tenants to become troublesome. So long as tenants will pay their rents regularly a landlord, unless he is in financial difficulties, has no inducement to sell. His property gives him a certain standing in the country and if it produces a fair return, no matter what the condition or troubles of the tenants may be, he has no desire to let his estates pass into their hands.

The Irish people are fully alive to the position of affairs, and whenever there is a chance of compelling their landlord to sell his estate they are not slow to seize it, and agitation at once springs up. Whatever English people may think of this process it is the only natural result of the present state of the law. Competent authorities, who have little sympathy with the tenants, have admitted the justification of agitation. Thus, The O'Connor Don, one of the best known resident landlords in the West of Ireland, at the landlords' conference in August admitted that where the tenant organization is strong and the agitation active, the collection of rent is troublesome, eviction is made difficult, with the result that those districts are rewarded with rent reductions and land purchase. Judge O'Connor Morris, hearing the appeal of Messrs. Fitz Gibbons and Webb, who had been sentenced to two months' imprisonment in connection with the agitation on the De Freyne estate, said for all that had taken

place on the De Freyne estate, the system of land purchase would, before the bar of history at least, be held responsible. He added: "In this unfortunate country abuses were allowed to grow up, and concessions as a rule were not extorted, except by agitation."

In face of these admissions by a landlord and one of His Majesty's judges, who can say that the tenants are not fully justified in an agitation, which frequently results in putting land purchase into operation? Could the position of the law be more absurd, and, one might add, more criminal? The Government has provided an excellent plan for putting an end to land troubles in Ireland by land purchase. But to secure land purchase the tenants have to become troublesome; if they are troublesome they are evicted from their holdings, imprisoned and become, in the eyes of the law criminals. Yet the Judge who sentences them to imprisonment says they are justified in all they have done. Under the circumstances one would have thought the Government would, at least, have stood aside and allowed landlord and tenant to fight the matter out. Instead of doing so, however, they have placed the forces of the Crown at the disposal of the landlords. The landlords' interests have been protected at every point; their rents collected and their decrees carried out. All this was done at enormous expense to the people. Here is a pretty picture of "government," in a civilised country twenty centuries after Christ; brought about simply because the English Parliament would not carry out to its logical conclusion legislation which has proved a remarkable success wherever it has been adopted.

As things have been in the past the Irish

people were drawn up into two hostile camps, and to all intents and purposes a state of war existed. On the one side we find practically the whole of the people organised under the banner of the united Irish League. The avowed object of the League is to carry out the Purchase Acts by compulsion; to win by agitation what Parliament ought to grant by legislation. The methods of the League are methods of the English trade unions drawn to perfection. The League is stronger and more effective than any Union we know of in England, for the simple reason that its membership consists of not merely a majority or even the whole of the workers in a certain industry, but the nation. Against the Irish nation we had the Irish landlords, and those who are interested in retaining landlordism, supported by the Government and the forces of the Crown. I have said a state of war existed in Ireland, and one can liken it to nothing else.

Ordinary law was suspended, and something approaching martial law substituted. Because no ordinary magistrates and no jury would convict men on charges which are purely political, popular and elected magistrates have been deposed, and the Government has the power of bringing men to "justice" before special magistrates, who have been appointed for the express purposes of securing convictions. Public meeting, trade unionism, free speech, a free press, are "crimes" in Ireland, for which men may be imprisoned, under the most cruel restrictions for lengthy periods. Ordinary crime, crime as we know it in England, is practically unknown in the rural districts. Yet the country side is lined with armed police, armed with revolvers and carbines, as well as the ordi-

nary truncheon, mounted on bicycles, ready to pounce upon the most unoffending persons who may have the temerity to advise the people to resist the arbitrary power of the landlords. At various intervals, through what are known as the disturbed districts, block houses, fully protected and loop-holed, have been put up, in order to more easily hold the people in subjection. The cost of thus garrisoning Ireland is, of course enormous. In proportion to its population the police cost is heavier than that of England; whereas but for the work of upholding landlordism it need not be more than a quarter as much. As I shall subsequently show when once the cause of discontent has been removed, ordinary crime almost vanishes. Handled in a proper manner the Irish are the easiest people in the world to govern. No people so fully recognise the great moral laws of right and wrong; no people so quickly respond to kindness and sympathy; no people are so ready to forget and forgive, or so anxious to be forgiven. The question English men have to ask themselves is how long they will be content to force Ireland into discontent for the sake of maintaining landlordism, when, by one simple Act, Ireland could be made the most contented; and, I will add, weighing every letter as I write it, the most loyal people within the British Empire.

III.

THE CONGESTED DISTRICTS.

So far I have only dealt with the land problem in general. But if one wishes to see the trouble in its most acute form, one has to go into the congested districts of Connaught. I spent some weeks there, and what I write is from what I have seen and heard from the people themselves, from their leaders, and from friends and agents of the landlords. A large portion of these districts were unoccupied fifty years ago, consisting almost entirely of bog land which nobody ever thought of attempting to cultivate. Running through the bogs, however, is some very fine land, which to-day is used for grazing farms, and accordingly very sparsely populated. I stayed at Castlerea and one day, driving out in the direction of Loughlynn, I passed through a district in which the cabins were only separated by a few yards. Another day I drove in an opposite direction, and as far as the eye could see there was not a single habitation to be found. Thus, within a few miles of each other we have the most distressing congestion, and the equally distressing absence of population.

It is most important that English people should understand that these districts need not be congested, if the land were properly distributed. In County Mayo, the Westport Rural Council has recently published a most valuable report, which shows that the evil is an artificial evil which can and ought to be

remedied. I will set forth the facts of the case as clearly as possible:

The population of the Westport Union is 37,361.

The area is 349,819 acres. The number of occupiers is 5,322, This should give each occupier at least 50 acres.

But of the 5.322 occupiers, 3,041 possess such small and poor holdings, that they are rated under £4; of the remainder, 1,048 are rated from £4 to £8.

Who then holds the land?

Sixty-six graziers hold 99,180 acres.

Thirteen landlords graze 52,145 acres.

These seventy-nine individuals hold as much land as the whole of the remaining 37,302 inhabitants of the district.

Of the sixty-six graziers only five are residential, 18 are shopkeepers in the town of Westport, 9 are professional men, 4 are bailiffs.

Thus, we see the great mass of people are kept off the land, kept in hopeless distress for the sake of a few individuals who are not dependent on the land for their living. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether any of them are making a profit out of their grazing. As the report says: "The grazing ranches of this Union are not, generally speaking, rich fattening lands, suitable for permanent pasture, but are mostly reclaimed lands, which, for want of periodical tillage, and owing to the exhaustion caused by the rearing of young stock, have largely lapsed back into heather, fern, and rushes, while eminently fitted for the mixed tillage and pasture which small cultivators and their families could pursue with profit." At present these lands are held

on the eleven months' system, which is, in point of fact, no tenure at all, and could be resumed at once without injustice and without compensation. Thus, without injuring anybody this congested district could, by the adoption of Land Purchase, be split up into small holdings, capable of supporting the people. What is true of the Westport Union, is true of the whole of the congested areas.

Probably the districts would never have become thickly populated but for the clearances which took place in the middle of last century. After the great famine many of the landlords cleared the people off their estates; and in place of the small holdings established vast grazing farms. Many of the people who were thus cast adrift emigrated to America, but a large number settled on these bog lands of Connaught, and, with a heroism born of necessity and want, commenced to make a home in the black marshy wilderness of the west. So thickly did they settle that most of the holdings are but a few acres in extent. The good land had been tenanted before they came; so, in order to live, they had to set to work to cut away the bog and reclaim the land.

Let me describe as briefly as circumstances will allow, the position of these tenants. First of all, having secured their little patch of bog they commenced, with the help of wife and children, to put up some sort of a house. Many of these are made of mud and stone; but the majority of stone only. This stone is found in the neighbourhood, and with their own hands, they carried the stones from the hills, and built the little home. From the neighbouring town window frames and perhaps doors were bought; but with this exception

every stick and stone in the cabin was put there by the tenant. The rushes for the thatch were pulled from a neighbouring swamp. Most of the cabins consist of one or, at the most, two compartments. Here the family, and often the cattle too, find shelter. A few of them have been able to build out-houses for their cattle. When the cabin was built, the harder and more hopeless task of reclaiming the bog commenced. What this meant only those who have seen the work in progress can form an idea. The bog has to be cut away to the depth of several feet, and then drained. Those who know anything of draining fenlands on the East Coast of England, will know something of what these poor Irish peasants had to attempt. To the ordinary mind the work of reclaiming the bog may sound simple enough. So it is when carried out on an extensive scale, with the aid of the best advice and unlimited capital. But as the work was and is done by these Irish peasants, the draining and reclaiming of the bogs can only be compared to the Israelites making bricks without straw. Without the aid of modern science, or machinery; often enough without the aid of any beast of burden, these poor creatures, with their own hands, dug out the bog and carried it away on their backs. Even where they were fortunate enough to possess an ass, or very rarely a horse, it is impossible sometimes to utilise them; the bog is so marshy that no ladened animal can find a foothold.

In this work the women and children joined with the men. Indeed, a considerable part of the work has fallen upon the women. And to-day, in the West of Ireland, it is a common sight to see a woman with a pannier strapped to her shoulders, as though she were a beast of burden, bending almost double under a load

of turf. Some of them have to carry these loads long distances over rough roads; roads which tire even the active and unburdened traveller. I once met a woman, who had to carry her load fully a mile; her husband, like most of the men from the West of Ireland, was in England earning in the English harvest fields, the money to pay the landlord's rent. When the bog has been cut away, then soil or gravel has to be dug out of the highlands and carried in the same manner from the hills back to the reclaimed land. Then manure had to be bought, on trust generally, and out of this land, which he has created by the sweat of his brow, the tenant tries to make a living.

Even supposing the landlord recognised that any value there might be in the land was the sole property of the tenant, and continued to charge the same rent, as when the tenant first entered, it would not be possible to make a living out of the holding. Accordingly, every year throughout these congested districts, every able-bodied man, nay every youth capable of holding a hay fork, comes over to England for the harvest. Many of them stay here after harvest is past and find employment as labourers in the foundries. I visited dozens of homes on the De Freyne estate where the father and sons lived in England for nine months of the year, in order to be able to pay their rent and keep their home in Ireland. Help also comes from America. Every Irish girl in these districts, when she reaches the age of fifteen, begins to think of going to America. And in a year or so later to America she goes, and then every month there comes back to Ireland practically every penny she can save. The manner in which the Irish children in America support their

parents would be a revelation to English poor-law guardians, who have the greatest difficulty in getting children to support their parents in old age. Not a penny of the landlord's rent in these congested districts comes out of the land, but from the labours of sons and daughters in England and America.

The pathetic attachment which binds the Irish people to their homes, even in the most desolate spots, is simply beyond all understanding. Men will cheerfully endure banishment from their families for months together in order to retain their holdings. Meanwhile the work of the little place is done by the women. They sow the crops, weed them, and gather them in. But what can one or two women do with even an acre of land? A woman in the years when the children are coming is left alone for months, forced to work as slaves in American plantations seldom worked, in order to grow the crops, feed herself and her children, and keep the house together. But for the heroic generosity of friends and neighbours many a poor woman would break down utterly. Those who are little better off than herself will freely give their labour and food, as long as they have strength and substance left. But, meanwhile, the landlord has increased the rent, and for land that a few years ago was valueless the tenant has to pay the price of good land. For years the tenant will struggle on, every year seeing his difficulties increase. He has not only arrears of rent, but is overdrawn at the bank, and in debt to the shopkeepers.

How has the family been living all this time? The majority of the people live on Indian meal and potatoes. Including what they grow themselves, the total value of their food in some cases does not exceed four

shillings a week! They could not even get Indian meal, if it were not for the goodness of the shopkeepers, who frequently trust the people for more than they could realise if they were to sell them up. The shopkeepers say they seldom, if ever, lose their money if the people are ever able to pay. The Irish peasant will almost starve rather than fail to pay anybody who has trusted him.

When the tenant gets into arrears with his rent he is unable to take advantage of the Act of 1881. For this reason. He is afraid to go into the Land Courts to have a fair rent fixed, because if he does so the landlord immediately comes upon him for the arrears. So, even if he gets a reduction in rent which is worth something to him when the law costs are paid, his last state is worse than the first. The landlord, angry at being taken into the Court, enforces the immediate payment of arrears, and the tenant, unable to meet them, has to go out. The result is that for a number of the men, who most need their help, the Land Courts are useless. So they struggle on, get deeper into the mire, and at last the landlord proceeds against them and eviction follows. What an eviction is like, I will describe later on. It often happens that an eviction takes place while the tenant is in England, and for fear of worrying him no word of what has happened is sent until he is about to start for home. But what must be his feelings when he comes back to find his wife and children homeless, and his little cabin and land, made by his own labour, in the hands of a stranger? Remember for how many years he has struggled to make the little place. Remember how passionately the Irish peasant is attached to his home, and then say is it strange if, in a moment of grief and anger, there was sometimes viol-

ence and bloodshed? The evicted tenants, have, however, shown a marvellous restraint under these terrible circumstances. In spite of the inducements to crime, there is less in these districts than in peaceful England. But for the fact that the Irish people are optimistic beyond reason, are deeply religious, have faith in their organisations, trust in their leaders, and believe they will win back their homes in time, Ireland, instead of being the most crimeless country on the face of the globe, would be a land seething with murder and anarchy.

I have explained why it is that tenants often dare not take advantage of the Act of 1881, to have their rents judicially fixed. But even when they do, it often happens that they are rented on their own improvements. One of the better class tenants in Co. Mayo, Mr. Jordan, of Ballaghaderreen, told me that he spent £300 in reclaiming six acres of bog land. The result was that in 1889 his rent was increased by £9. There was more land on his farm which might have been reclaimed, but he made up his mind he would never reclaim another yard so long as it was possible for the landlord to penalise his industry. I came across numbers of similar cases, but this perhaps is the most striking. On every hand you hear similar stories. Every rood added to the fruit bearing earth, every improvement to the drainage of the bog, every added comfort to the home means an increase of rent. Thus we see that industry, thrift, and even cleanliness are discouraged, since improvements of any description only lead to increased demands from the landlords. In most cases, of course, the landlord knows nothing of the circumstances of his tenants, he leaves the whole matter in the hand of his agent. The more money an agent can ex-

tract from the tenants the better agent he is supposed to be. But we cannot be surprised that the Irish peasants have made up their minds to rid themselves of both landlord and agent.

Perhaps some of my readers may think my picture of the condition of these congested districts is overdrawn, so I will conclude by quoting from a very able work on Ireland, which was published by the present Government. It is "Ireland: Industrial and agricultural," issued this year by the Department of Agriculture, of which the Right Hon. Horace Plunkett is the head. The following extract will be found on pages 259—261 : —

> The great majority of the inhabitants were in possession of small plots—they could hardly be called farms—generally about 2 to 4 statute acres in extent. The rents for these holdings varied from a few shillings to several pounds a year ; in most cases rights of turbary (i.e., rights of cutting turf for fuel) and rough commonage grazing rights were appurtenant to the holdings, and frequently the tenants possessed the right of cutting and gathering seaweed for manure or kelp burning. The plots were usually planted with potatoes and oats, and the methods of cultivation were extremely primitive ; there was no rotation of crops, no adequate supply of manure, and no proper system of drainage, whilst the breeds of live stock were worn out and of little value. The result was that the inhabitants were forced to depend very largely upon certain secondary sources of income of an uncertain and varying nature. Many "congests," as they are locally known, received occasional gifts from relatives in America, whilst weaving, knitting,

and sewing formed other small subsidiary sources of income. The results of sea-fishing helped the families dwelling along the coast to eke out a scanty living, whilst those living inland depended largely upon the wages earned during some months of the year as migratory agricultural labourers in England or Scotland. Thus in most cases the people did not really live on the produce of their holdings, but rather on some secondary source of income, such as field labour in England or Scotland; they paid a rent for their holding, generally not because of its agricultural value, but rather because it was necessary to have some home for their family. IN A GOOD YEAR MANY OF THE INHABITANTS WERE LITTLE MORE THAN FREE FROM THE DREAD OF HUNGER, WHILST A BAD YEAR, ARISING FROM THE COMPLETE OR PARTIAL FAILURE OF THEIR CROPS, PRODUCED A CONDITION OF SEMI-STARVATION.

The following significant description of the poverty prevailing in the congested districts—compiled from the evidence of Mr. W. L. Micks, given before the Royal Commission on local taxation—is incorporated in the Special Report, presented by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and Lord Blair Balfour: "In the congested districts there are two classes, namely, the poor and the destitute. There are hardly any resident gentry; there are a few teachers and officials; but nearly all the inhabitants are either poor or on the verge of poverty. . . The people are very helpful to one another —the poor mainly support the destitute."

The Board collected and published in its first report considerable information as to the income and expenditure of typical

families in the congested districts. The following are samples:—

Receipts and expenditure of a family in comparatively good circumstances, the receipts being derived from agriculture, migratory labour, and home industries:

RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Sale of cattle	6	0	0
Sale of sheep	2	10	0
Sale of pigs	3	0	0
Eggs	4	0	0
Migratory earnings of men	10	0	0
Childrens', as servants	6	0	0
Knitting, sewing, etc.	7	10	0
Miscellaneous sales of kelp, butter, fish, fowl, etc.	2	0	0
Total	41	0	0

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.
Flour or baker's bread	9	2	0
Tea	6	1	4
Indian meal	3	18	9
Sugar	2	3	4
Fish and bacon	2	0	0
Salt and soap		10	0
Oil and candles		15	0
Clothing (exclusive of puchases by migratory labourers while absent from home	6	0	0
Rent	1	10	0
County cess		5	0
Church dues, etc.	1	0	0
Tobacco	3	0	0
Furniture, etc.	1	0	0
For replacing or exchanging cattle	2	0	0
Young pig	1	0	0
Bran	1	0	0
Carts, implements, etc.	1	0	0
Artificial manures	1	0	0
Total	42	15	0

Receipts and expenditure of a family in the poorest possible circumstances, the receipts being derived from agriculture and labour in the locality:

RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Eggs	1	3	0
Sixty days' labour at 1s.	3	0	0
Herding cattle	4	0	0
Total	8	3	0

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.
Rent	1	0	0
County cess		2	0
Meal	5	17	0
Clothing		10	0
Groceries	4	0	0
Total	11	9	0

The home produce consumed by the family was valued at about £6.

These facts and figures speak eloquently for themselves, and show that in some congested districts, at the time the Board was established, the value of the produce of some of the small holdings, together with the earnings and receipts of the family from every other source, did not exceed a total of £15 a year. Even in the less distressed portions of the congested districts the standard of living was low, the diet of the poorest section of the people being altogether vegetable, with the exception of salt fish and bacon at times, which was used more as a relish than as an article of food. The houses, furniture, and bedding were too often unhealthy, mean, and comfortless, and the clothing frequently ragged and scanty.

When it is remembered that the landlords have always endeavoured to make out that there is no discontent in Ireland, except what is created by agitators, the above picture, drawn by an official of the present Government, is most convincing. The condition of these people can be improved to-morrow, if the Government will only give the word. Knowing this it requires no agitation to make the people discontented. Men who would not be discontented under such conditions would be unworthy of their manhood.

IV.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

For years the peasants in the congested districts of Ireland have been fighting for conditions which would make it possible to live on their holdings. Fighting against increased rents, fighting for larger holdings, fighting in order to get hold of the vast unpopulated grazing lands, and last of all fighting for right to purchase the land, the value of which they have themselves created. The fight has not been waged without much misery and hardship. But you may search the country in vain to find a man who thinks nothing has been gained. Concessions have been wrung from the British Parliament, which would certainly not have been granted had not the people fought for them. This is admitted on all hands to-day, and I now propose to describe an estate where the warfare has ceased, the victory completely won; where peace, contentment, and prosperity reign. This is on what was, and will probably always be known as the Dillon estate. The estate in question was the property of Lord Dillon, consisting of over 90,000 acres, situated almost entirely in County Mayo. There were 4,200 tenants on the estate, the great majority of whom lived on the bog lands, while the greater part of the estate was let out into large grazing farms. Indeed, the estate was typical of the congested district which I described in the previous chapter. The Dillons had a fine Mansion, known as Loughlynn

House, a stately Elizabethan residence, standing in a beautifully wooded and watered park of some 700 acres. The home for a prince. And princes, indeed, might the Dillons have been among their people, had they lived among them and cared for them. But for eighty years a Lord Dillon has never been known to reside at Loughlynn House. I spent many happy days in this district, coming into contact with the generous warm-hearted people, who would have been ready to worship a landlord who had done anything to win their affections. I wandered through the stately rooms of Lord Dillon's mansion, looked out from the windows, and stood spell-bound at the magnificent view which stretched over the lawn, over tree tops, over lake and rills, over fields and woods, to the white thatched cottages of the peasantry. And I marvelled that any men, possessing such a home and such a people should have preferred to have been one of a thousand peers in the London drawing-rooms, when they might have been kings and princes among the people of Mayo. But such is the deadly attraction of London, that Irish landlords forget their homes, forget the people by whose toil they exist in idleness, forget their duties to humanity, and are content to drain the country side of its resources and squander them in another land. I do not say the Dillons did any of those things; all I know is they left their demesne to be inhabited by their agents, and were unknown to their tenants. As for their treatment of their tenants, I did not trouble to enquire any further than facts and figures would show. But those facts and figures are startling enough. The rent roll of the estate rose from £5,000 in 1839 to £23,000 in 1879. That vast increase in value was not brought about by anything which the Dillons

did on the estate, but solely by the labour and industry of their tenants. It is not surprising, with these figures before us, to know that whenever bad seasons came along Lord Dillon could not easily get his rents, and troubles broke out. It is because the people resisted the arbitrary demands of Lord Dillon's agents that they are to-day free and happy in the possession of their holdings. What some of these people endured only the wildest imagination can realise. Mr. John Dillon, in a speech in this district, last year, recalled a scene which he said he had witnessed hundreds of times, and which in a few words will show to what straits the people were forced. "Twenty-one years ago," he said, "in the dark black days of '79 I have seen hundreds of times a long string of starving men and women standing shivering at the doors of the pawnshops in Ballaghaderreen, and pawning their beds from under them, in order to get a little Indian meal to keep body and soul together. And when we held the Claremorris meeting and asked the landlords for mercy, we got for answer extra police and hundreds of eviction notices. Then I swore, and the men who were with me, Michael Davitt and those who started the Land League, that so long as God gave us health and strength to fight the battle of the people we would declare war, implacable and unrelenting war upon landlordism in Mayo, until every landlord had been banished from the country." . . . . . "Lord Dillon began to see that if the Nationalist party was ever united again, not a penny of rent would he collect, and like a sensible man, when the Congested District Board came along and offered him £290,000 for the estate, he accepted it."

In 1899 the troubles on the Dillon estate ended. The Congested Districts Board stepped in, and negotiated for the purchase of the estate, and Lord Dillon was bought out. But with the purchase of the estate the Board only commenced their work of transforming a dismal and discontented district into a bright, happy, smiling country. The first great task the Board set themselves to do was to re-divide the land. The grazing farms were cut up, and the tiny holdings enlarged. In some cases people were taken out of the congested districts and planted in new homes and new holdings. This enabled the Board to enlarge the holdings of those who remained behind. The Board has sometimes experienced difficulty in getting people to move out of the congested districts, although to do so meant greatly improved surroundings. The reasons for this are natural. First, the people have a passionate love for the old home; second, they feared to undertake increased financial responsibilities; thirdly, they have not been accustomed to look upon Government officials as their friends. The Board posseses compulsory powers of removal, which, however, are quite useless, as they can only be exercised by the consent of three-fourths of the people on the estate. Or an estate which is twenty miles long, it is impossible to get the people to understand the right and wrongs of individual cases. Whenever Land Purchase becomes general, and the necessity of removing people out of the bog is imperative, compulsory powers will have to be secured. But it will also be necessary to place the working of the scheme in the hands of a popularly-elected body, whom the people trust. At the same time every praise is due to the officials of the Board for the tact they have

shown in this matter. And they are to be congratulated on the wonderful success which has crowned their efforts. They have re-divided the estate, so that each holder has a piece of good arable land, a piece of grazing land, and a piece of bog land.

The next great work after re-dividing the holdings was to re-drain the bogs. This has been an enormous undertaking. First of all the Aglora and Kilkelly rivers had to be deepened, and then miles of main and tributary drains were cut. In this work the tenants themselves were employed, and were able to earn sufficient to enable numbers of them to remain in Ireland. Then new roads have been made in all directions, so that the tenants can get down to the bog to cut their turf with some degree of comfort and safety.

The happiest day I spent in Ireland was in driving through this estate and seeing the work of improvement going on at every turn and in every holding. Mr. Doarn, the able superintendent of the work, very kindly placed me in charge of one of his officials, Mr. Cecil Kelley, who most courteously took me wherever I wanted to go, and told me all I wanted to know. One of our first visits was to Cloontrumper. Cloontrumper has a history. Once upon a time it was the home of the peasantry. Then one day the fiat went forth, and though each man was ready to pay his rent he was turned out, and the little cabin he or his father had built was levelled to the ground. Some went to America, some to the bogs where they tried to make a new home. Then for fifty years there was the peace of desolation in Cloontrumper, and the beast of the field roamed where once had been the happy homes of

men. But once more the wheel of destiny has turned full round and the Dillons no longer hold power over the lives and homes of men. The desolate grazing farm has disappeared, and once more the homes of the people are built. The vast prairie is cut up into holdings of about 25 acres each. Each holding is surrounded by a wall, and entered by an ornamental gate. In the centre, with a garden in front, is a charming little house, the doors and windows of which are thrown wide open. There are dainty curtains in the windows, and bright flowers on the window sills, next year there will be ivy and creepers climbing over the doorway. Through the open doorway one catches a glimpse of spotlessly clean floors, and tables as white as wood can be scrubbed. But it was my business to find out more than could be seen from the outside; so we walked up the garden path, and knocking, were soon made welcome. Mrs. Dolan was very busy; she had only been in her new home a few weeks, and she told us things wern't straight yet. But she soon hoped they would be when her son came home. Her son was harvesting in England, as usual. But now they had twenty-five acres of land they must have him back, and she did not think he would need to go again. We walked up the garden to the outhouse, where the cocks and hens, the cows and the pigs, each in their own compartment, greeted us joyously, as though they understood as well as anybody else that a new order of things had commenced to reign on the Dillon estate. As we walked back to the road again, Mrs. Dolan pointed out with pride the walls and fences they had put up; she talked of the flower garden and the kitchen garden they hoped to plant; and, over and over again, repeated "it is so good to feel the land is our

very own." I went into other cottages, but the same tale was told everywhere, contentment, happiness, a new zeal and energy; a new aspect of the Irish character, which we thought only showed itself in the far-off Colonies, where the sons of Erin found a land of liberty. If those cottages at Cloontrumper had been mansions, those little holdings, lordly parks, the owners could not have been happier, prouder, or more content with their lot. We drove past the police barracks, a decaying remnant of the bad old days when the Dillon rents were collected at the point of the bayonet. But there is no work for the police on the Dillon estate to-day, and before long the armed barracks will disappear. Then into another townland, where the tenants are in their old homes; but the old homes have a strange newness about them. New windows, new doors, new roofs, new outhouses; the tenants are straining every effort to keep pace with their neighbours. The Board is encouraging them by providing materials at cost price. But there is no philanthropy about it, everything is being done on strict business lines. "You see, sir, its different now," a tenant explains to me. I will not attempt to put his musical brogue into English. "You see before we never knew but our rent would be raised; or may be that we might have to go out. But now its our own, and so we are trying to make the best of it." Over and over again they told me "its so good to feel the land's our own; and all we do to it is for ourselves and our children." I have said all this is being accomplished on business principles. So it is; but to-day the Dillon tenants are paying 6s. 8d. in the £ less to purchase their holdings than they were paying to rent them from Lord Dillon. Not a single tenant is behind hand with his

payments, or is ever likely to be unless an unforeseen and unheard of calamity happens. Mr. Kelly told me that if a man ever got behind with his payments he was always willing and anxious to come and "work it out" on some of the works which the Board is carrying on. And what a change in the people is here. They are happy as the day is long. Many of them who a few years ago possessed no better means of conveyance than a donkey-cart, are now driving their jaunting cars, and a fine animal between the shafts too. I have not time to write now of all the Board is doing to improve horse-breeding and mule-breeding, of fresh seeds and new appliances for agriculture which they provide; or of the work of the parish committees in stimulating self-improvement in the home and on the farm. I could write of the enthusiasm with which the officials are doing their work, and the splendid character they give the people; of the new life, new hope, new vigour which seems to permeate the very atmosphere. But enough has been said to show that here, in the darkest corner of Ireland, the land trouble has disappeared. Adopt the same policy throughout Ireland, and you have solved the Irish problem. Leave matters as they are, and this bright spot will but accentuate and increase the difficulties elsewhere. Even the improvements on the Dillon estate cannot be completed unless the scheme is carried out throughout the country. The very drainage cannot be made efficient, because the next landlord refuses to allow it to be carried beyond the borders. While in another district the adjoining property is being considerably enhanced in value by the Dillon estate system of drainage, so whenever the Government wishes to purchase this latter estate they will

have to pay for their own improvements.

But matters of this sort are small, when compared with the more serious issues at stake. Side by side with all this new life, new hope, and new conditions which have transformed the Dillon tenants, are the hovels where the wretched tenants of Lord De Freyne are struggling with nature and adversity to pay an unending rent, in order to retain the right to keep the roof, which they have built, over their head, and the little patch of bog which they have re-claimed from the swamp. The Government has stepped in and saved the Dillon tenants from the grasp of the landlord, but it is sending its armed police to enable Lord De Freyne to collect his rents.

One of the happiest effects of Land Purchase has been the almost total disappearance of crime. A resident magistrate on the Dillon estate (Mr. Jordan) told me that in the Ballaghaderreen Petty Sessional Court, which used to be held once a fortnight, they frequently used to have from sixty to a hundred cases. But since Land Purchase has been introduced the number of cases has decreased so enormously that the Court now only meets once a month, and even then there are rarely more than ten cases. I heard similar accounts from other parts of the estate. This seemed to me such an important and interesting testimony to the benefits of Land Purchase that I made it my business to bring the matter before Mr. Horace Plunkett. He very kindly promised to try and give me the official returns of police cases for the three years previous to the purchase of the estate, and the three succeeding years. Unfortunately, he found no such returns were to be had. Had they been secured I feel sure a very wonderful result would have been seen.

But even under the most adverse circumstances, produced by Coercion Acts, Ireland is almost crimeless. The proportion of criminals to the population in Ireland is 744 per 100,000. In England, where Coercion is unknown, it is 621 per 100,000; while in Scotland it is 1,489 per 100,000. Crimes against property are fewer, in proportion, in Ireland than in Great Britain. In Great Britain the number of such crimes, according to last year's official returns, was 8,902. This represents a proportion of one crime to 4,156 of the population. In Ireland the total of such offences was 956, or only one to 4,682 persons. In crimes against property accompanied with violence, the disparity is much greater. The total return in Great Britain was 2,465, or one for every 15,010 persons; while in Ireland it was only 189, or one to 23,579 persons, such crimes, in proportion to the population, being 57 per cent, more in Great Britain than in Ireland.

What minute proportions the criminal statistics would assume if Coercion were abolished, and Land Purchase became universal, I can only leave to the imagination of the reader.

BEFORE LAND PURCHASE.

Picture of a Tennant's Cottage under Lord Dillon.

AFTER LAND PURCHASE.

The same Tenant's Cottage under the Congested Districts Board.

These Photos., kindly sent me by Mr. Doarn, show the great improvements brought about by the Board through the operation of Land Purchase.

V.

THE HISTORY OF THE DE FREYNE DISPUTE.

I have made several references to the De Freyne estate, and as this estate has been, and is, the scene of a most unfortunate land war, I think it will be well to give some account of what has happened there during the last year.

Thanks to the personal kindness of Mr. John Dillon, who gave me an introduction to Mr. John Fitz Gibbon, of Castlerea I was kindly received by the local Nationalists Mr. John Fitz Gibbon, who is the most prominent man in the district, has for many years been the chief adviser and friend of the tenants in this part of Ireland. He is a successful man of business, a devout Catholic, and a very ardent temperance reformer. As a local government administrator, Mr. Fitz Gibbon is a man of exceptional ability. He is chairman of the Roscommon County Council, chairman of the Castlerea Rural Council and Board of Guardians. Had he any desire he could have entered Parliament at any time during the last fifteen years; he has preferred to do the less conspicuous, but no less honourable work of guiding the national movement in his own county. From Mr. Fitz Gibbon, from reports which have appeared of cases brought before the magistrates, from conversation with hundreds of tenants on the estate, including Mr. Patrick Webb, the vice-chairman of the County Council, and from Lord De Freyne's agent, Mr. Woulfe

Flanagan, I have gathered the facts of the history of the dispute.

The De Freyne and Dillon estates adjoin each other, for several miles through the Counties of Mayo and Roscommon. Up to the time of the purchase of the latter they were alike in many respects; each having a large number of tenants living crowded together on the bogs, as well as a number of grazing farms, supporting only a few individuals. Each estate has been the centre of continual strife between landlord and tenant; in fact, whenever two or three bad seasons came together the people were rendered destitute and desperate. The Government purchased the Dillon estate, but left the De Freyne tenants to the mercy of their landlords. During the last three years the De Freyne tenants have been watching the improved conditions which have taken place throughout the Dillon estate. They could not understand why their neighbours were receiving such benefits, and themselves left out in the cold. The De Freyne tenants had to meet and compete with the Dillon tenants in the same markets, and they found they were no longer able to compete with them. So, when last year's harvest failed, and the prices of horse and stock declined, they decided to ask for a reduction of rent, which would put them in something like the same footing as their neighbours on the Dillon estate. They asked for the same rent as the Dillon tenants were paying for purchase. How far the De Freyne tenants were justified may be gauged from the fact that Judge O'Connor Morris, in his charge to the grand jury at Boyle, in January last, said:

"I say without hesitation that the tenants on the De Freyne estate and all circumstanced in the same way, have a great legitimate griev-

ance. . . . The tenants on the De Freyne estate live close to the Dillon estate, and they see the tenants on the Dillon estate, without a particle of right have received an enormous benefit which the tenants on the De Freyne estate have not received. One class is the favoured class, and the other class is the disfavoured class. One class reminds me of the fat sheep put into a pen, and the other class of a number of lean goats put into a pen, with the result, and that necessary result that the tenants on the De Freyne estate are discontented, and in my opinion, naturally discontented. . . . Whatever may be said, this combination is the necessary and inevitable result of this system called Land Purchase. What must be the consequence, or in all probability will be the consequence? In a very short time these decrees will be enforced. The necessary result in three or four months hence will be disorder, confusion, and bad blood. And I pray God that crime and outrage may not follow. What is the further result? I greatly fear that in a few months the plan of campaign, with all its frightful consequences will follow, that existed in this country a few years ago—ruin to landlords, beggary and misery to hundreds of tenants. There can be no doubt that this system called Land Purchase increases in strength the cry for Compulsory Purchase."

Well, the De Freyne tenants, having decided among themselves to ask for a reduction of rent, marched in a body to French Park, the residence of Lord De Freyne, to ask his lordship to meet them. It is a curious fact that the tenants did this without asking anybody's advice, and without any promptings from outside. Lord De Freyne, personally, is not unpopular with his tenants. His mother was one of the people; he is a Roman Catholic, and resides for some period of the year on the estate. Accordingly the people had no fear in approaching him. Arrived at the park they found the gates shut against them. They were told that Lord De Freyne could not see them, and if they had anything to communicate they must put it in writing, and his lordship would then consider it. So the ten-

ants appointed a deputation to wait on the agent, Mr. Flanagan, consisting of the Very Rev. Canon White, Mr. Fitz Gibbon, Mr. Patrick Webb, and Mr. Wm. Ellwood. Mr. Flanagan refused to meet Mr. Fitz Gibbon, because he was not a tenant. The others were informed that no reductions could be made.

Seeing that nothing could be gained by reasoning with the landlord, the tenants asked Mr. J. Dillon to come down and advise them. They held a meeting at Lord De Freyne's gates, French Park, on November 17th, 1901, and Mr. Dillon reviewed the situation. He pointed out that nothing could be done except they were thoroughly organised, so as to be strong enough to make things uncomfortable for Lord De Freyne. He advised them to join the United Irish League, so that they would be in a position to compel their landlord to come to terms. As there has been some considerable misrepresentation about this speech, I think it is well to say that Mr. Dillon did not advise the people to refuse to pay rents. He did not advise them to commence a struggle against the landlord; he merely advised them to organise, so as to be in a position to do something when the proper time came. There were several reasons for this. The chief was that the tenants were not organised, and were not entirely united. Some of them preferred to borrow money to pay their rent rather than fight. Then, in spite of the dark history of the De Freyne estate, and the appalling condition of the majority of the tenants, Lord De Freyne is not the sort of landlord whom the Nationalist leaders would wish to push to extremes. He is a man whom they wish to see remain in Ireland when present troubles are past. As a result of this conference a number of the tenants

paid their rents, although some of them had to borrow money to do so. A further number determined to hold out in the hope of a reduction, and fully a third of them were unable to pay, even had they desired to do so. A few days after the French Park meeting the tenants met again at night, to consider the situation. In fact, they had several meetings, and as they could only attend at night, and had no place large enough to meet in they met in the open air, and conducted their deliberations by torchlight. There was nothing terrible about this, although in certain quarters it gave rise to needless fear. For, in spite of Judge O'Connor Morris's predictions, there has not been a single case of violence on the part of the De Freyne tenants, from the beginning of their fight until this day. Shortly after the French Park meeting the tenants asked Mr. John Fitz Gibbon to meet them and talk the matter over. They were anxious to make a fight for a reduction of rent. Mr. Fitz Gibbon pointed out to them the serious nature of the conflict on which they were entering. But a large number of the tenants were in a desperate position, and were determined to go on. So Mr. Fitz Gibbon told them they must first of all raise a defence fund of 5s. in the £ on the value of their holdings to protect those who would suffer through eviction. This was agreed to, and the tenants subscribed something like £1,700 as a defence fund.

Subsequently a deputation, consisting of Canon White, Messrs. Ellwood and Webb, saw Lord De Freyne, who received them very kindly. The deputation suggested a reduction of 3s. in the £. Lord De Freyne would probably have signed an agreement to that effect, but he said he feared it would be counted as

a victory for the United Irish League. Mr. Webb, on the part of the tenants, undertook to publish a statement to the effect that the reduction of rent was a private arrangement between landlord and tenant, in which the United Irish League had no part. This, of course, was absolutely true, as the League had, so far, not interfered in the dispute. Lord De Freyne undertook to consider the matter, and the deputation left him, confident that the dispute would be amicably settled. Unfortunately, their hopes were dashed to the ground. Lord De Freyne seems to have consulted with other landlords, and finally he refused any abatement.

It seems to me perfectly idle to suppose that the tenants would have embarked on this fight had they not been forced into it by their economic position. Numbers of them had been paying their rent, and paying their arrears too, as long as they were able to do so. But the bad season, and the unequal competition of the Dillon tenants compelled them to make a stand for equal treatment. It cannot be too clearly understood that the struggle on the De Freyne estate commenced as a struggle for terms of bare existence. It was not a question of the tenants trying to make a better bargain with their landlord; it was a question of making terms in order to live. Rightly or wrongly, when Lord De Freyne refused those terms the tenants decided to hold the little money they had in their pockets, and try and compel him to listen to reason A year has gone past since they decided to fight, and the tenants have given up hoping to win a reduction of rent; but they hope, as a result of their struggle, that the day will soon come when they will be allowed to purchase their holdings.

The happy position of their neighbours on the Dillon estate, a position won entirely through fighting the landlord, encouraged the De Freyne tenants to make a bold bid for liberty.

But it was now the time for Lord De Freyne to make a move, in reply to the tenants. This he did with promptness, but with unnecessary harshness and severity. Instead of taking the ordinary civil, or, as we should say in England, County Court process, he proceeded by the higher Courts. This had the result of increasing the costs to an enormous extent. Thus, where the rent owing was only £5, the costs amounted to £40. The result was that tenants, who would probably have borrowed, or begged the money to pay their rent, rather than be turned out of their little homes, were rendered absolutely helpless and hopeless when confronted with these enormous costs. Mr. Flanagan, Lord De Freyne's agent, told me, "We were determined to take the most powerful weapon we could to fight the tenants." There is, however, probably, more than appears on the surface in this extreme policy. Lord De Freyne is reported to be a poor man; Mr. Flanagan told me the reason he did not consent to the tenants' demands was that he could not afford to do so. Is it at all likely, therefore, that he could afford to risk such heavy costs? If the fight is carried on to the bitter end there will be a large number of evictions, and in addition to losing his costs, Lord De Freyne will lose his rents and have to pay the emergency men, who are placed in charge of the evicted tenants' houses. To-day the fight is costing Lord De Freyne something like £50 a week; if it is continued it will cost him nearer £500 a week. Nobody supposes Lord De Freyne

is finding the money to carry on the struggle. Many people think he has no desire to carry it on, or that he even wished to enter upon it. The plain truth of it all is that Lord De Freyne is associated with the landlords' combine, and he is no longer the master of his own destinies. The landlords' trust, of whom Lords Ardilaun, Barrymore, Londonderry, Lansdowne, and the Duke of Abercorn are the directors, control the business. These men have imagined that if the tenants succeeded in forcing Lord De Freyne to sell, every landlord in Ireland would, in turn, have to yield to the same force. So the fight goes on. It may be continued for years, or peace may come to-morrow. There can be peace on the De Freyne estate twenty-four hours after the noble lords named above decide to make terms with the tenants. Peace will come when the noble lords are willing to allow the tenants to become the owners of lands, the value of which the tenants have created. There are great issues at stake, issues, the moulding of which the brave but poverty-stricken tenants of Lord De Freyne are slowly but surely shaping. The end must come, sooner or later. Whether it comes soon or late it will be the same. There is only one class of men who can, or will farm the lands of Roscommon, and those are the men whom to-day Lord De Freyne is casting out on the roadside to be the prey of the chilling blast and the biting frost.

I have said there are great issues at stake. There are. Issues on which the future of Ireland may depend. If the tenants win the right to purchase their holdings, it will not only be a victory for themselves, but for all Ireland. It will be a victory for compulsory Land Purchase, which means peace, contentment and good government.

VI.

THE CASE FOR LORD DE FREYNE.

I have thought well for various reasons to devote a special chapter to Lord De Freyne's side of the case in the dispute, which is now going on between himself and his tenants.

On the day I arrived at Castlerea I made it one of my first duties to call at the estate office, "Arm Lodge," to interview Lord De Freyne's agent, Mr. S. Woulfe Flanagan. Mr. Flanagan belongs to an old Irish family. One of his brothers is on the staff of the London Times, and is the author of the well-known "Parnellism and Crime."

Mr. Flanagan received me most kindly, and willingly consented to give me any information I desired as to the cause, history and progress of the dispute. He first of all humorously warned me that he was an old Tory, and that he did not suppose I should agree with his views. My reply was that I had not come to Ireland to hear men's views so much as to find out facts.

"For several years," commenced Mr. Flanagan, "we have had what the Nationalists call a 'land war' on Lord De Freyne's estate. At periodical times the tenants have refused to pay their rents. But up to last November there has been a period of comparative quiet; and the tenants had not only paid their rents regularly, but were paying up their arrears as well. With every year's rent num-

bers of them were paying half a year's arrears in addition. All was going well until last November, when Mr. Dillon came down here. He spoke at French Park, and advised the tenants to strike against paying rent and make things intolerable for Lord De Freyne, so that he would be glad to sell out and get rid of the estate. In this way, Mr. Dillon said, they would be able to force on a demand to sell the estate at a reduction of 6s. 8d. in the £ on their present rentals, similar to that given by the Congested Districts Board on the Dillon estate."

Mr. Flanagan said he was "quite confident that the people would never have commenced the dispute if they had not been urged on by paid agitators. There had certainly not been quite such a good year for the stock and the horses; but that was not a sufficient reason for the people acting together in this way, and refusing to pay rent."

In reply to my question as to whether it was not natural for the De Freyne tenants to demand the same conditions as enjoyed by the Dillon tenants, Mr. Flanagan said it was "certainly very human, but it was a Socialistic doctrine which could not for a moment be accepted. The rents had been fixed by law for a period of fifteen years, and it was most wrong and immoral to seek to induce people to break their bargains and refuse to pay rent. The fact was that the fall in the price of cattle, and the sale of the Dillon estate was taken hold of by the agitators as an excuse to commence the dispute for political purposes and personal vanity."

"Could not you," I asked, "have come to terms with the tenants for a small reduction, and so saved the dispute?"

"Lord De Freyne cannot afford to accept any reduction on the present judicial rents," was Mr. Flanagan's reply. "He has large payments to make out of the estate, certain engagements which were entered into by his father, and which he is bound to fulfil. The tenants can very well pay, and would be quite content to pay if the agitators would only leave them alone. Besides they would not have been allowed to accept any offer, which Lord De Freyne might have been inclined to make. The agitators have forced the people into the fight, and they would have made them go on with it, in order to serve their own political ends."

"However," continued Mr. Flanagan, "when we saw that we were being faced with a determination on the part of the tenants not to pay their rents, we decided to take the most powerful weapon we could to fight them. Accordingly, instead of proceeding in the ordinary County Court, we proceeded by a Higher Court. In this way we were able to get possession of the holdings three months' earlier than we should have done. Of course, the costs of going to a higher Court were rather heavier than if we had proceeded in the ordinary way. But I contend we were fully justified in adopting any legitimate means to enforce the payment of rent. We have been strongly censured for taking this course, because the costs in each case, instead of being a few pounds have mounted up to over £40. But this is due to the tenants themselves, or rather to those who are supposed to be their friends. When we applied for powers to take possession of the holdings they entered a defence. Of course, they could not possibly have any defence, but counsel had to be engaged, and a lot of legal arrangements had to be gone through.

The costs would not have been more than £12, if this defence had not been entered. No defence was made, and no defence could be made, so that all that was gained was a delay in execution, and these tremendous costs."

"I am very sorry for some of the tenants," said Mr. Flanagan, "who have been dragged into this dispute against their will and ruined. Numbers of them would have paid their rents only they dare not do so. Many of the tenants dare not be seen coming to the office. Some of them would slip a cheque into my hand as I walked through the market. Others would send their rent by Post, and ask me not to send them a receipt."

"You mean to say then that there has been intimidation?"

"Most certainly there has."

"Well now, Mr. Flanagan, I cannot quite understand how it is that the people have, as you say, been dragged into this fight, and yet there has been intimidation. I can understand there being intimidation where it is a people's movement, and where a small minority who would not join their neighbours might find things made unpleasant. But if this is not a people's movement, if they were dragged into it against their will, who was going to do the intimidating? You can only have intimidation where there is a strong popular movement, and the majority intimidates the minority. Were there any outrages?"

"On one occasion as I was driving home, I was struck with a heavy stone, and should probably have been assaulted had I not had a good horse and been able to get away."

But Mr. Flanagan," I replied, "some of my friends in England, who opposed the war, had

to endure assaults and intimidation far worse than this; and the Government stood by and refused to give any additional protection. Can you tell me a single case in which any man was intimidated? If you can I will go and visit that man, and find out what happened?"

"It is very difficult to give individual cases," replied Mr. Flanagan.

"And now, Mr. Flanagan, let us leave that subject for the present. Will you tell me what is the real cause for all this trouble? What is the economic cause?"

"The trouble is caused by the congested state of the district. These congested districts are caused by the constant re-division of the land among members of a family. But more particularly by the clearances which took place years ago, when the people were cleared out of their holdings by hundreds and large grazing farms formed. The people were originally driven on to the poor lands of Connaught by the Cromwellian settlers; and the infamous land laws and penal enactments of the 18th century. Then again in the famine years of 1847—48 the people were cleared off by hundreds; but none of these clearances took place on the De Freyne estate. Had they been cleared off we should not have these troubles.

Through various causes the people were forced on to the bogs, where it is impossible for them to make a living on their holdings. Their holdings will not produce what Mr. T. W. Russell calls an 'economic rent.' The people cannot live unless they can earn money elsewhere. Hundreds of them go to England for the harvest every year."

"And so pay their rent?"

"I do not think their rent has anything to do with it. Their rent is very small indeed, numbers of them only pay £1 to £5 a year. There are undoubtedly a good many very hard cases, and if their rent was wiped out altogether they would be unable to make a living out of their holdings. Their rents have been fixed by the land courts, and what else can be done?"

"Then you think the rent fixed by the land courts is a fair rent?"

"No, I certainly do not say so. It is often an unfair rent; unfair to the landlord. Indeed, neither landlords nor tenants are satisfied with the decision of the Land Commissioners. Often enough they do not understand the values of the land they have to inspect. Then, if you appeal there is no more satisfaction to be had. The man who is supposed to revalue the land has the figures of the first valuer before him, and in many cases I have known their figures to be absolutely identical."

"They were simply a copy of the others?"

"It would appear so."

"One more question, Mr. Flanagan, Is there any possibility of Lord De Freyne allowing his tenants to purchase the estates?"

"Certainly, I think Lord De Freyne would sell if he could get his price."

"And what would his price be?"

"That I am unable to say; but probably the last judicial rent, at thirty years' purchase."

"But the tenants can hardly be expected to pay that, in face of what is happening on the Dillon estate."

"And Lord De Freyne cannot afford to take less," was Mr. Flanagan's emphatic rejoinder.

"You are in favour of Land Purchase?"

"I am strongly in favour of Voluntary Purchase; but not of compulsory purchase, unless the Government is prepared to ensure the landlords against loss. And even then I do not think it would be advisable. We might in time have an agitation against paying the Government's rent, as we have to-day against the landlords' rent."

After this the conversation turned to other subjects. Mr. Flanagan turned the tables against me by comparing the lot of the Irish tenant with that of the slum dwellers in the big cities of England. I replied that what we wanted in England was a few good agitators. I advised Mr. Flanagan to get the Irish land question settled, and then send all the agitators over to England to wake up the British working man to a sense of his position and power.

A neighbouring landlord writes as follows:

Dear Sir,—I understand you desire to hear something of the landowners' view of the trouble on the French Park estate. I, therefore, note down a few matters which may possibly interest you. The owner, Lord De Freyne, represents one branch of the ancient family of French (or Ffrench). Another branch is also ennobled under the title of Lord Ffrench (formerly of Castle Ffrench, Co. Galway). The present family are nearly 300 years settled at French Park. They have always been Liberals in politics, and always been most liberal in their views on religious matters; not a usual thing with Church of England gentry in Ireland. Over 100 years ago, when Catholic

landowners could not leave property by will, to their children, the head of the French Park family was usually selected by those owners, who lived within reach of them, as a legatee, of course, in trust, invariably carried out faithfully. They always liked, and sought to be popular, and influential amongst the people, and always were so, and could then always have gathered a larger following than any other county family. I often heard, when a boy, that they would never refuse a bit of land on the estate to any decent working man who wanted one. This possibly may account for the number of small holdings on the property. During the great famine, they, and the then owners of the Dillon estate, borrowed from Government large sums of money, to be expended on land improvement, in order to support the people. I have heard on the best authority, that on these two estates the population did not diminish during the "famine" years.

The present agitation is purely political and speculative. When the Congested Districts Board were allowed to use public money to obtain and re-distribute the Dillon property, the great reductions they were enabled to give caused much envy and jealousy on the French estate. The Irishman hates nothing so much as to see his neighbour get anything which he has not got himself. It is exactly the feeling of the Gospel labourers, who did not like to see others paid as much for one hour's labour as they were for 12. The feeling is not unnatural, particularly amongst people who take much more interest in their neighbour's business and circumstances than in their own. A few agitators, chiefly local, saw their chance and used it; hence the trouble. Yet, Lord De Freyne was, and is personally popular, amongst his own

people. You will, no doubt, have heard how he was requested to patronise the local sports, in the height of the struggle, and was cheered on the ground. I know that he was personally quite grieved to have this struggle forced upon him. But he had no choice, except that between yielding to an unfair and tyrannical demand, or resisting it. He chose the latter, and is far more respected by the people themselves than if he had done otherwise. You are, no doubt, aware, that practically all the more considerable tenants on the estate have now paid the full rent, with heavy costs in addition. A pretty good proof that their interests in their lands are valuable, and their rents fair; many are low. As to the little tenants, about whom we hear so much, you will note what I have already said as to the old practice on the estate. Amongst these I include those who pay from £1 to £5 a year. I do not think anyone can suppose that a family (say five persons) could be supported by the produce of such holdings. Yet, in almost all cases the holder could get a considerable profit on his annual rent, did he let his land for the year to his neighbour. But in these holdings the rent is rather an "accommodation" than an "economic" rent. These men are really labourers, who like better to live in the country, amid wholesome surroundings, however poor, than in the slums of a city like the London hop picker. I suppose NO labourer is housed FREE, anywhere. I think the lot of the pauper householder on the French Park estate is beyond all comparison, more desirable than that of the ten times more numerous workers inhabiting your English cities. These migratory labourers all bring home substantial earnings, and often are BEST OFF in years when potatoes and oats have failed here.

Surely no thinking man can believe that a reduction of one-third, 33s. 4d. in a £5 rent, would make any perceptible difference in the comfort of these people.

You are at perfect liberty to make any use you please of anything I say here, but on the understanding, which I am sure you will observe, that no clue be afforded to the identity of the writer.—I am, faithfully yours,

VII.

THROUGH THE DE FREYNE ESTATE.

The Englishman who makes his first visit to what are called the disturbed districts of Ireland, receives many shocks. Everything seems to be governed by rule of contrary; everything seems so opposite to what he is used to in peaceful England; things seem to be upside down. But what is to him most mad, is the Government of the country. We regard government at home as a maternal sort of arrangement, designed to protect the people from violence, robbery and fraud. Our policemen are the the friends of all, the enemies of none but the worthless. It is something of a shock, therefore, when a few hours after leaving our shores, one steps into an English-governed country where this state of things seems reversed, and the Government is the avowed enemy of the people, and the friend of a small minority. So when I drove out from Castlerea to look through the De Freyne estate my first and strangest experience was being followed by police, mounted on bicycles and fully armed. Why should an unknown Englishman, travelling with peaceful intent on his holidays through the country be subjected to such extraordinary police supervision? There is no other country in the world, save Russia, where such a state of things is possible; the cause of it is the same in both cases. The Government is trying, most madly trying to govern the country

against the wishes of the people, and so it has, what I heard described as the "jumps"; it is afraid and suspicious of everybody who enters it. A few miles out we passed one of the police huts, with which the De Freyne estate is studded; and where five or six police are located. The huts are known by the people as block houses, and have rifle holes in the walls. One soon realises that the police are, to all intents and purposes, an army in possession of a conquered country. And yet the people themselves are not only free from crime but free from the spirit of hatred and malice, from which crime springs. Take an average crowd of Irish peasants, and one is struck with the purity of their faces; faces which are free from evil passions. Faces which are worn and drawn, weather beaten and wrinkled, if you like, but there is an utter absence of anything which is evil or wrong. Mr. William Jones, M.P. (North Carnarvon), who was with me on a subsequent journey, was particularly struck with this fact. No man with the least knowledge of human nature could persuade himself that these people would be difficult to rule if properly handled. But there is a fire in those wonderful grey eyes, there is an intelligence in those vivacious faces, there is a determination, and a pride in those musical voices, which tells as plainly as words can that they are a people who may be led, but will never be driven.

We drove out through the strangest country I have ever seen, curiously reminding me of our own black country. Black dismal bog everywhere, with here and there little patches of green, and hard by each little patch the tiny cabin of some poor peasant. They wave to us as we drive past, and many a blessing comes floating across the still air. A bless-

ing for the friend who is my guide, who is a friend and guide of the people, and who according to the mad methods of government in Ireland has had to suffer imprisonment for his faith and friendship.

Our car stops in the centre of a little cluster of cabins, and the children are running swiftly towards us. They stop a few yards away, and my friend says, "Go and tell your mothers there is an English gentleman who wants to see them." And away they scuttle, little bare feet rushing swiftly over rough road and stone, never stopping to pick their way. The wind tosses their long hair to and fro, while their voices are calling like silvery bells. Sturdy little folk they are with such perfectly rounded limbs, such healthy glow on arms and legs and cheeks that one never need despair of the Irish race, if only it were possible for them to stay at home. But in a few years' time, when the "little gossoons," as my friend calls them, have grown to maidenhood and youth they must go across the seas; because, although there are thousands of Irish acres waiting to be tilled, the laws are such that the people born on the land must cross the ocean to find a home for their industry. But the mothers are coming back to us, with the children around them; and here and there an old man, feeble and bent with years. In the whole crowd as they gather round the car there is not a single able-bodied man, all such men are in England. I am introduced: "This is an English gentleman who has come to see you." Then there is such a shaking of hands; "You are welcome to this country, sir," is the first greeting from each. But it is usually followed by another; sometimes quaint, and generally a blessing. "May the Lord be as pleased to see ye, as we are."

Or, "May ye be as welcome in Heaven as ye are here." "Heaven bless ye, sir, and bring ye good luck." I can repeat their greetings, but it would require the brush of an artist and the pen of a poet to depict the warmth, the fervour, the gratitude, with which they are given. "Tis very good of you, indeed, sir, to come all this way to see us poor people," says one old veteran, who long past the time when he can work seems to be held in greater reverence by his neighbours. Indeed, he is put forward as their spokesman. His story, the story of hundreds and thousands of Irish peasants, I need not give here, because I have been trying to give it in what I have written. While the old man is telling the story of their struggles, I am looking more closely into the crowd. The faces have lost the first eagerness which illuminated them, and I see now the marks of labour and struggle. I see the deep furrows of sorrow and pain. I see their clothes are threadbare, and the pure pink flesh is but barely hidden from the cutting winds. Not one in the crowd, save the old man, has boots on his feet. Every woman and child, young and old, is standing with bare, toil worn feet upon the rough road, and I realise that there is a depth of poverty beyond what I had ever seen at home. But they were clustering round me closer; the old man has seized my hand, and is pouring forth his tale with an eloquence which is, at once, picturesque and heart rending. Now and then he stops for a name, or a date, or a figure. Instantly it is supplied by a dozen voices in the waiting crowd. The old man's hand clutches me tightly, as he tells of the struggles to make the rent; how their sons go to England and their daughters to America to send back money to help their parents to keep the old

heme over their heads. And the women look up to me with appealing eyes, and the little children too. All the laughter has gone from them now; they look at the Englishman as though he were some strange being from a far country, who was all powerful to make them happy. It is not only the little children, with those big grey questioning eyes who think so; the grown-up children seem to think so too. They are thinking that the Englishman can help them; they are thinking of him, not as an unknown unit among his people; but as the representative of the great nation, which has so long misunderstood and misgoverned them. The old man is saying, "If your countrymen would only come and see us, we know they would soon put things right. But they don't know anything about us only the lies the Castle tells them." How many times was that sentence repeated in my ears by other crowds in other parts of the west; nay, wherever there is trouble in Ireland it is repeated over and over again. But, alas, Englishmen do not go to Ireland. While the old man is talking I suddenly realised how impotent I was to help him or the women and children around, who are looking up so confidently into my face. There was a terrible pathos in it all which made me dumb. While he talked I remember the generations of Irish peasants, who have gone down in the struggle, and yet the old man hopes to see the end. I remember, too, the vast mass of my countrymen, who have neither knowledge nor care for the troubles of these poor Connaught peasants. How helpless and worse than helpless I felt. Here, strangely mingled, were poverty and industry beyond my ken. Here were the materials of a happy, contented, and prosperous country

and people. Here was a crowd of women and children ready to be slaves, like beasts of the field, if by so doing they could mend their lot. A mile away the Dillon tenants were making the desert to blossom like the rose; and here, because the Government will not extend its powers, there is misery and want. But the old man had stopped talking, and he is waiting, the women are waiting, the children are looking up to see what the Englishman will say. But he can say nothing, because there is a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes; because he feels he can do nothing, though he knows what might be done. Still something must be said, and as he shakes hands once more, he manages to tell them that if only his fellow countrymen could be brought over to Ireland their troubles would vanish. But that when he goes back to England he will try and tell them all about it. One feels it is but a poor consolation to offer them, but they seem to realise it is offered with all sincerity, and as we drive away they shower their blessings upon us. "God bless you, sir," "God save all good Englishmen," "God save England," and they stand there waving and cheering in their strange musical Irish way, until a bend in the road shuts them out of sight.

Another mile or two through this dreary land of bog and marsh, and we come to another cluster of cabins. We have the same greetings from the children, followed by their mothers, and a few old men. This time I thought I would question them. The place is called Tully. The first woman I speak to is Bridget Dillon, who has 6 acres of land, for which she is expected to pay £3 15s. a year. An Englishman would not give the odd 15s. for it. She has reclaimed two acres of bog, and is in arrears with her rent. The bog comes

up to her very door, and in the winter the water comes up too. A quarter of a mile away the Dillon tenants are draining their lands, and being paid for their work, and here they are almost drowned in the winter.

"Who was it started this fight with Lord De Freyne?" I ask.

"Sure, we started it ourselves, because we could not pay the rent."

"Had not Mr. Dillon or some of the agitators something to do with it?"

"Indeed they hadn't. We went to French Park to ask Lord De Freyne to give us the same as the Dillon tenants, and when we got there the gates were shut in our faces."

"But Lord De Freyne could not afford to give such a reduction, perhaps; would you have accepted less? Say, two or three shillings?"

"Indeed, we should have been glad to accept anything, sir."

"But why don't you pay your rent, instead of making all this trouble?"

"And how can we pay the rent, sir?" replied a woman, whose name was Mrs. Cuttle. "There's my husband in England for eight months in the year, and he sends home all he can. But what have I left to pay Lord De Freyne. I will not pay him more than is just, not if they turn me out of doors."

There was one man at Tully who is what they called "comfortable." He had 8 acres, for which he paid £3 11s. 3d. The whole of the land had been reclaimed, and the cabin built by his father and grandfather. His name was John Duffy. He could not have earned a living off this 8 acres. But he had two sons in England who send home

money. He was a clever man as a cattle dealer, and so was able to earn a living. The land would not, he said, support his family for two months in the year.

A woman told me she had just put three bags of manure upon the land. She had it on trust, and the money to pay for it would have to come from England. "The shopkeepers will always trust us," she added, "because they know we will pay when we can. If they were to come down on us like the landlord there would not be a cow or a calf or a pig or a goat left among us."

At Carrowbehey I spoke to a poor old creature, named Catherine Flanagan. She was 73 years of age, her hair had long since turned grey. She was in a most pitiable condition, and her clothes were almost worn to rags, no shoes or stockings on her feet. Her husband was too ill to work. She had 2 acres of land, for which she was expected to pay £1 15s. She owed £4 and costs, and had received a process for rent. She had no cattle at all. She had some potatoes and oats. "And how can you work it by yourself?" I asked. "I can't work it, sir, I am too old; but the neighbours is very good to me, and they help me to sow my crop and to get it in." As I looked at this poor work-worn, broken creature, I understood something of the spirit which has animated the Irish peasants in the struggle to maintain a "home" upon the land.

Later on I came upon Lord De Freyne and his shooting party. Never, surely, has an Englishman witnessed such a sight before. The party was surrounded by armed police! Police in plain clothes were, I was told, among the party itself. Of Lord De Freyne's beaters not one was a resident on his estate,

except his own servants or members of their families.

At Erritt I met Michael Finnigin. He built his cabin himself, he reclaimed the land, and he has to pay £1 16s. a year for the patch. He was £3 9s. in arrears, and the costs amounted to £1 14s. Michael could not make a living on the land, and has to go to England for six months in the year to work in gas works, leaving his wife and five little ones behind him.

In the same district I met John and Thomas Hevican, brothers, who had a holding between them, for which they paid a rent of £15 8s. They had been evicted a week before (on August 14th), and they were now staying in a neighbour's house. They only owed one year's rent, and yet proceedings had been taken against them and costs put on amounting to £84. They told me they and their father before them had reclaimed the land and built the cabins. They had had bad luck last year with the cattle, and illness in the family, and could not pay their rent.

"Who advised you not to pay your rent?" I asked.

"'Twas no man's advice, sir. We asked for a reduction, because we could not pay. So we went with the other tenants, and asked for a reduction."

"Do you mean to say you went and did this without any of your leaders telling you to?"

"We did, sir; we wanted to be put on the same lines as the Dillon tenants."

Thomas Hevican, who was telling me this, is a very intelligent man; but, poor fellow, he seemed nearly broken down by his misfortunes. His wife and child were ill and home-

less. When they were evicted they were roughly handled by the police, and it seems they had not recovered from the shock. Later on we went into the neighbour's house to talk matters over. I was struck with their graceful courtesy; they received me with that combination of pleasure and pride, which seems to be the natural gift of the Irish people. Seated round the turf fire, with the children standing in the shadows, they told me their story. Mrs. John Hevican is a young woman of exceptional intelligence and grace; she had been a school teacher. "If they were all like me," she said. "Lord De Freyne should have the land all to himself." But what can they do; if they cannot get a bit of land, they must go to England or America. But they love their country, and so when the people were cleared off the land they came and settled on the bog. And they could manage if they only had enough land at a fair rent. Across the river we can see the tenants on the Dillon estate, as happy as kings in their palaces. They have plenty of land, all drained, nice little places, and not much more than half the rent we are paying. Even if we do try to make our little place better the landlord comes down on us for more rent. At one time £7 10s. worth of land was taken away from us, but we still had to pay the same rent."

Later on I went to look at the Hevican's house. I was met by two armed police, and the man who was put into possession by Lord De Freyne. I tried to take a photo of the house. Immediately the emergency man rushed at me, and attempted to strike me, and used abominable language. But for the fact that my friend shouted out, "This is an English gentleman," I should have been very roughly handled. I afterwards mentioned

the matter to Mr. Flanagan, who told me that the men who were put in charge of these houses were often the very worst and lowest characters to be found.

At Dromod I met Mrs. Ellwood carrying a pannier of turf upon her back; she had to carry it over a mile. She has four children, and has lost her husband. She has five acres for which she pays £3. She grows potatoes and oats, doing all the work herself.

Conor Kilgarif, of Dromod, was in England. He sends home £2 a month. His rent is £3 13s., and he is £7 6s. in arrears. His wife is ill, and the doctor orders her food and nourishment, which she cannot buy; there are several small children. They have only potatoes to live upon; this year's crop is very poor. Mrs. Kilgarrif has been too ill to work the land.

Pat Mahon, of Cloonmaul, was also in England. His wife is dead; a daughter and little ones were at home. Pat has 7 acres, at £4 10s. He only owes one year's rent, but he has been taken into Court, and the costs amount to nearly £40. The daughter, who was a fine intelligent girl, said her father would return home in November. But the order for the eviction of his helpless children was already issued. There will probably be no home for Pat when he comes back from England.

At Fairymount I came across John Sharkey, an old man of eighty, who lived with his son Pat. Pat has lost his wife, and has nine little children. They had 11 acres, for which they paid £7 10s.; they owed four years' rent, and the costs against them were £39 10s. They had been evicted, and I saw the armed police in charge of the little cabin.

And yet during the last two years they had paid three years' rent; that is the regular rent and a year off the arrears! The old man told me his story in a broken sort of way. How he had gone to England, when he was a young man, and stayed there until he had earned £70. Then he came home and took a patch of bog land and reclaimed it, built the cabin with his own hands, and married. But there was no living to be made on the place, and when he was old he would never have managed, only his sons in America sent him help. I went to the cabin where the old man was staying, and found that the children were sleeping on the floor, so that he could rest. I took a photo of the group, and as I came away they waved to me as long as I was in sight, and shouted "God save England."

An Evicted Family sheltered by their neighbours.

[The old man dressed in black and standing in the doorway on the left of the picture is Jno. Sharkey, Mr. Patrick Conry, C.C., is standing in the foreground.]

James Rodgers, of Branean, an old man of seventy, has five acres, which he reclaimed from the bog; he built his cabin with his own hands. He owes two years' rent, and has been served with a process. He has paid rent for forty-three years. He could not have struggled on only a son in Leeds has sent him money, and sent money to send his sister to America; now both send help to the old man. Every inch of the soil was made valuable by the work of the tenant; in forty-three years he has purchased the original value of the land ten times over, and yet if he cannot find the money Lord De Freyne will seize the little cabin, and the old man will be turned out.

Martin Roddy, of Cloonmaul, has a few acres for which he used to pay £2 13. He now pays £8 10s.; the increased value being due to his own labour. Martin would have appealed against this extortion, but when the Commissioners came round he was in arrears with his rent, and he knew if he appealed he would be proceeded against to recover the arrears, and be turned out. So he has had to go on paying a heavy rent ever since.

Dominick O'Doherty, of Cloonmaul, has another little patch of bog, which he has reclaimed; the cabin he built, but could not make a living. He is 65 years of age, and has been to England every year for 45 years, in order to earn money to live.

And so I could go on reciting case after case, which show conclusively that it is impossible for the people to live on the land, under present conditions. But enough has been said to make this perfectly clear. I think, however, a word should be said respecting arrears of rent. The tenants' arrears of rent are not only responsible for keeping the tenants out of the Land Courts, and a just

valuation of rent, but are the means by which Lord De Freyne has held a whip over the people. I will conclude by quoting from the report of the appeal of Messrs Fitz Gibbon and Webb, heard before Judge O'Connor Morris:—

Mr. Fitz Gibbon said he had quite recently seen a tenant who had eight in family. He had only two acres of land, and two acres of bog, which he reclaimed. This tenant told him that he owed arrears which he would never be able to pay, and that if he went into the Land Court the landlord would come down on him. This man paid in '97 one year's rent; in August, '99, he paid 1½ years' rent and £3 17s. costs; in May, 1900, he paid £1 18s. 10d.; on the 30th of January, 1901, he paid one year's rent; and on the 4th of September, 1901, he paid £1 18s. 10d. A few days ago this tenant received a summons to give up possession.

Judge O'Connor Morris: I have judicial knowledge that there was a great accumulation of arrears; and you know that Lord De Freyne did remit a considerable amount of those arrears, and did it under considerable pressure on my part.

Mr. Fitz Gibbon: The pressure had a very good effect as long as Mr. Blakeney was agent. But it will surprise you that the compact entered into between Lord De Freyne and the tenants at the time has not been kept, and that Mr. Flanagan, the present agent, is bringing arrears against the people —arrears that should have been wiped out by that arrangement.

Judge O'Connor Morris: I have all my life set my face against this accumulation of arrears; and in the year 1894 I made a very determined stand to compel a reduction and

an annihilation of these arrears. I understood, and distinctly understood, that Lord De Freyne was to get two years' rent, and was to wipe off all the arrears.

Mr. Fitz Gibbon: That has not been done, my lord.

Judge O'Connor Morris: In consequence of this very Lord De Freyne estate, and in consequence of the very strong stand I made on that occasion, an Act of Parliament was passed by which the landlord can no longer recover more than two years' arrears.

Mr. Fitz Gibbon: Do you know that he didn't wipe out the arrears on the payment of two years' rent?

Judge O'Connor Morris: I am very sorry to hear that he didn't. Lord De Freyne's tenants might have a good cause of complaint, and quite independently of this I think they have a good cause of complaint.

Mr. Fitz Gibbon: In one year a poor widow on the estate has paid five years' rent; and here she is served with a summons, and the last payment is the 23rd of May, 1901.

VIII.
EVICTIONS.

Ireland is a land of sorrow and tears. Sorrows and tears which might easily be turned to joy and laughter by the simple operation of Land Purchase. But the present condition of the country produces only misery. Englishmen who cling to their homes and their family circle, should at least spare a little practical sympathy for the Irish people who, from their youth upwards, are constantly being called upon by a ruthless system of land tenure to sever those ties which all men have come to regard as most sacred and precious. Human and family bonds deeply imbedded within our social relationships are the strongest bulwark of national stability and prosperity. Yet, in Ireland, such bonds are no sooner formed within the hearts and lives of the rising generation than they are hopelessly broken. Here are the cold hard facts, (taken from an official report), which so soon overshadow the family life of the Irish child in the west:—

"Two special trains per week are despatched from Westport during the season, with small farmers setting out to work as labourers on the farms and in the ironworks and mines of England. There are two sailings per week from Westport to Glasgow and Liverpool, by which the migratory labourers, male and female, leave their homes to earn money for the support of their families. The population is further depleted by two special trains per week of emigrants proceeding to America by Queenstown, the latter being almost exclusively young people from 15 to 35, in the flower of their age and strength."

Beneath this plain official statement of one of the cruelest facts of Irish life, there is a world of sorrow and anguish, which no words of mine can picture.

Sudden partings,

Such as press the life from out young hearts

And choking sighs which ne'er might be repeated.

The scene at the stations as these trains leave is terrible. Fathers and mothers, torn with gentle firmness from the embraces of their children by the railway officials, as the train prepares to start on its journey. Yet they run along the platform, and by the side of the line crying the last farewell, the last blessing, until exhausted nature compels them to fall down by the wayside. It is bad enough to witness such a sight as this; but in the tragedy of Irish life there is a still darker scene, when the people are hurled forth from the little cabins, around which all their love and labour of their lives has centred for a generation or more. I will try and describe what I saw on the De Freyne estate one fatal Friday in August last.

We started from Castlerea with the sun shining, Mr. William Jones, M.P., Mr. Councillor Roberts, of Liverpool, Mr. John Fitz Gibbon, Mr. T. M. Carey, of the Freeman's Journal, and myself. At Loughlynn we fell in with the eviction party; Mr. Flanagan, Lord De Freyne's agent; Mr. Boris Shields, the Sheriff; County Inspector O'Connell, District Inspector Supple, District Inspector Hetreed, and a body of police, sixty strong and fully armed. When I saw this large force, knowing that they only had women and children to contend with, I was not greatly impressed by the majesty of the law in Ireland,

or the English Government which prostitutes it to such ignoble uses. A war on women and children does not increase an Englishman's pride in the political genius of his countrymen. Soon after we left Loughlynn, in the midst of the "troops" it commenced to rain, a pitiless soaking rain, such as one only experiences in Ireland.

The first victim was an old man, named Thomas Mahon, of Curroghiel. The police soon had a cordon round the house with their carbines ready for any resistance. But poor Mahon, old and broken in health, with eleven children, the youngest of whom was only four years old, could not have resisted a single constable. The house seemed deserted; the door stood open, and a tabby cat sat calmly by washing itself. Puss alone seemed unconscious of what was happening. Outside the armed cordon a large crowd of women and children had gathered, groaning and hooting the agent and police. The Sheriff and Agent advanced to the door, with an escort, and inside the old man his wife and children were huddled in a corner, the elder ones crying bitterly, the smaller children looking on with wide-opened frightened eyes. Very quickly they were turned out into the pitiless rain, and I trembled for the tiny ones, scantily clad and barefoot. The few articles of furniture were bundled out too, and then Lord De Freyne's representative took possession.

Mr. William Jones, who seemed deeply touched, spoke comforting words to the homeless family; and between their broken sobs we slowly gathered their story. Mahon had five acres of land, and owed £10 rent, to which had been added £40 17s. 8d. costs. He had paid his rent regularly up to two years ago. But he had been ill, and unable to go to England to work, hence he was not only

unable to pay his rent, but would have starved but for the fact that the shopkeepers had trusted him. There was just one golden ray of hope in the midst of all this gloom. The Irish people are true to each other in their struggle for life. And Mr. Patrick Webb, who had joined us, promised that the family should not want for food, and a man named Thomas Mahoney, who himself has four in family promised to find them shelter for the night.

We drove away to the next victim of landlordism, a Mrs. Bridget Naspsey, of Whilestown. Mrs. Naspsey is an old woman, who has been a widow for fifteen years. Her's was a very poor little cabin, which could only be reached by walking up a swampy track. She had ten acres of land, three acres of which her husband had reclaimed. Her rent was £9 5s., and only one year was owing. Again we had the same ceremony as before, the cordon of police, the groaning crowd, the parley between the agent and the tenant, then the eviction. Needless to say the poor old creature offered no resistance to the troops. She told Mr. Flanagan she would have paid her rent, if she possibly could, but that she had not the money. How she had ever managed to pay at all was a complete mystery to the Englishmen who were present. However, the old woman was put out into the rain, and her scraps of furniture, a bed, a table, and two chairs, after her. While this was being done her daughter entered the house and attempted to take out with care some article for which she had a special regard. She was immediately seized by the throat by a ruffianly constable, who would have hurled her out. Fortunately I happened to be standing near, and I was able to prevent this.

The police in Ireland stand in wholesome dread of what an Englishman may do or say. They will treat a representative Irishman, whether he be a Member of Parliament or a County Councillor, with indifference and often impudence; their behaviour towards these gentlemen is what might be expected from irregular troops in possession of a conquered country. But an unknown Englishman is an unknown quantity. Possessing unknown influence perhaps; a man whose word may reach Dublin Castle. Hence he is respected and his good opinion frequently sought after. I was told that but for the presence of Englishmen nobody would have been allowed within the police cordon, and a good deal of unnecessary violence would have taken place. That this was probably a true estimate of what would have happened, may be gathered from the fact that the same constable, to whom I referred above, Head Constable McGowan, most brutally assaulted Bridget O'Donnell, a girl of 14, when he happened to have a chance of doing so without being observed. A number of children were groaning at the police, and McGowan, who was near them, was walking his cycle under the shadow of a bank. Thus hid from view he suddenly rushed his machine at the girl and knocked her down. I and Mr. Jones came up a minute or two after, when the girl had been picked up, and were shown the marks of where the wheel had passed over her. I was informed that this man is a notorious character, who has been promoted for his conduct on similar occasions. It was not, therefore, surprising that the women and children shouted "Sherridan," wherever he appeared. I must say, however, that with a few exceptions, the police behaved very well. Mr. O'Connell and Mr.

Supple handled them in an excellent manner, and did their best to prevent unnecessary violence on the part of the men. Some of the constables are excellent fellows, but there is a larger proportion of depraved brutal faces among the R.I.C. than any other body of men it has been my experience to meet. Some of the better men told me, in private conversation, that it is these ruffianly characters who are marked out for promotion.

The next to be evicted was Bernard King. Here, for the first time, was something approaching resistance. King is a young man, and years ago he had promised his old grandmother, who built the house, that he would never give it up without a struggle. Accordingly he had barricaded his door. His wife remained with him inside, but the children were in charge of the neighbours. When the police had surrounded the house King appeared at the window, and asked to see Mr. Flanagan. He was willing to pay two years' rent, but he could not pay the costs, some £40. But Mr. Flanagan would not accept anything less than half the rent with half the costs down, and a bill for the remainder.

"I can't pay that Mr. Flanagan," replied King. "I have not got it to pay. I don't want the land, Lord De Freyne can have his land. I only want to keep the house me old grandmother built. Sure she would turn in her grave if I give up the old house."

Then the Sheriff stepped forward, and said he must take possession.

"I won't give it up," replied the desperate man. "I have paid that man every penny I could. Why didn't he send me a civil bill, and then I would have paid. Why did he send me neighbours a civil bill, and make me pay all these costs. How can I ever raise up my head from poverty, if he makes me pay

these costs. I don't want the land, I only want the house, and I'll fight for the house that me old grandmother gave me."

Meanwhile an immense crowd had gathered, but there was no interference when the Sheriff proceeded to attack the house with pick-axe and crow-bar. Very soon the door was smashed in, the stones behind cleared away, and the police were in possession. Poor King was taken, bravely struggling to the last against the attack which had been made simultaneously front and rear. I shall never forget the man's agonising struggles, and his lamentations that he had not held the house. Mr. William Jones did his best to quieten the poor fellow, as he vainly struggled in the grasp of two stalwart constables.

Suddenly his wife caught sight of him, and made a rush to his rescue. A policeman roughly pushed her back, and fearing the woman would be hurt, I caught her and held her as gently as I could. For a time she struggled, but gradually gave in, and then, leaning her head upon my shoulder, sobbed, as only a woman weeps when death has robbed her of her child. Presently Mr. Jones joined me, and we said what we could to comfort her. We asked her to tell us all about her trouble, and as the sobs lessened she gradually told the story. She was a delicate refined woman, with wonderful grey eyes, that filled as they were with despair would have moved the hardest heart. Her story was only one of a thousand such stories, of money saved in America and sunk for ever in an Irish bog. She told us how she had gone to America, when she was a girl, and for years had sent home money for her parents. Then how she had worked and saved for 14 years, until she had £113 in the bank. How proud she was to come back to her "boy" with her money.

Bernard had worked hard, and had made a road down to the bog and drained the land. All her money had gone into the land; they had paid £60 in four years, and they had no arrears. Though their money was all gone into the land they might have managed to pay part, if it had not been for those dreadful costs. Then she began to tell us how happy they had been, how proud they were of the little place, proud of their three little ones, how she hoped and worked for better times, but now all was gone. These memories brought back tears again, and the poor heart-broken woman made a half defiant, half-pleading effort to get away from me, and join her husband, who was still vainly trying to break loose from his captors. This, I knew, would only mean more distress and probably violence. Leaving Mr. Jones with her, I went beyond the cordon of police, and found her baby in charge of a neighbour. I had the little one, only three months old, brought to the mother. The baby held out its little hands to its mother, a smile broke through her tears, she ceased to try to get away, and taking her baby in her arms she was led away to the quiet of a neighbour's house.

The police left the scene of the eviction, amid the groans of the people. And, as last of all, our car moved off the groans turned to cheers and blessings. Those who were strongest, and best able, followed us for fully a mile, cheering as they ran.

The evictions were continued the following day. There was the same force of police, although only women were being proceeded against. The following account of the day's proceedings was written by Mr. T. M. Carey, of the Freeman's Journal, a gentle-

man, with whom I had the privilege of becoming intimately acquainted, and of whose abilities, as a journalist, and personal character, I had good opportunity of judging and of forming a very high estimate:—

The scene of operations was in the Loughglynn district. Three families were evicted. There was only one English spectator, Mr. G. Wallace Carter, of Lincoln. Mr. John Fitz Gibbon, of Castlerea, and Mr. Denis Johnston, United Irish League Organiser, were present throughout the proceedings. They were everywhere received by the evicted families and the assembled crowds of country people with warm expressions of greeting, and were frequently cheered most enthusiastically. The weather was fine, except for an occasional shower. It is only right to say that Head Constable M'Gowan was quite well-behaved to-day.

Having proceeded a short distance the eviction party halted at a gateway, which opened into a rugged path leading through a cutaway bog, to the house of Mrs. Catherine Conry, of Clonboney. The holding lies in a particularly congested district, there being no less than forty-two families living on one hundred acres. The houses are pretty close to one another in two parallel lines, stretching along at the base of a slight eminence, on either side of it. Mrs. Conry occupies thirteen acres, the yearly rent being £5 15s. 6d. The arrears of rent claimed amounted to over £28, and the costs to £40 15s., in addition, making about £70 in all. The tenant has been a widow for the past eleven years, and, as she stated to me, her husband had been sick in bed for over eleven years before his death, "with me and the children feeding him," as she put it. She has two

sons at home, one of them in ill-health since last December, and one son is working in England, and she has two daughters in America. The evicting party, on making their appearance, were received with cries of denunciation by a crowd gathered near the house, principally composed of women and girls. Mr. Fitz Gibbon and Mr. Johnston were warmly welcomed, and a similar greeting was extended to Mr. Carter, when it became known that he was a sympathetic Englishman. The Sheriff's representative and Mr. Flanagan entered the house through the open door, accompanied by several policemen. Mrs. Conry's invalid son, a young man of about twenty-eight years of age, was sitting by the fireside, a big frieze coat buttoned around him. His face bore evident traces of severe illness and the listlessness of the invalid which he displayed were in painful contrast with the healthy looks and bright demeanour of the girls and young men encountered in the district. Mr. Flanagan approached Mrs. Conry, and a conversation ensued between them.

Mrs. Conry (addressing Mr. Flanagan) said: You know I cannot pay costs. Why didn't you send me a civil bill?

Mr. Flanagan: If you wished to buy your farm in Roscommon you could do it.

Mrs. Conry: I had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Flanagan: You left it in the hands of your friends, who destroyed you. There was not a penny piece to pay except a year's rent.

Mrs. Conry: I would pay it if I had it. You cannot take blood out of a turnip.

Mr. Flanagan: Why not ask me for time?

Mrs. Conry: I did ask you above in the field. I will pay two years' rent.

Mr. Flanagan said the eviction would have to proceed.

Mrs. Conry and her invalid son were then removed from the house, the son seating himself on a box in the yard. Some of the furniture had been already removed, and the bailiffs proceeded to dislodge the remainder.

Mrs. Conry again spoke out, and said: I will sell all and pay eleven guineas, that is two years' rent. But I won't pay any costs. Approaching Mr. Flanagan she asked what his claim against her was.

Mr. Flanagan said there was £40 15s. in costs, and there was over £28 rent due. She should pay the whole of the rent due to last May, and half the costs in cash, and she should give a bill for the other half. Turning to Mr. Carter, Mr. Flanagan added: "She allowed her farm to be sold by the Sheriff in Roscommon. She hadn't a penny-piece to pay in costs, but she would not be allowed by her friends." Mr. Flanagan subsequently took occasion to correct this statement, and informed Mr. Carter that, though in the vast majority of cases there were no claims for costs against the tenants at the time of the sale, there was a claim against Mrs. Conry for £6 costs.

Mrs. Conry: I have no one to blame but myself. Look at my boy over there (pointing to her sick son).

Mr. Carter subsequently expressed the hope that her son would soon be better.

Mrs. Conry: It is in the hands of God. Blessed be His holy name. Lord De Freyne would not like to be put out of his own castle, and my house is as good to me as his castle is to him.

Speaking to Mrs. Conry's son, I learned

from him the circumstances under which he became ill. He is twenty-eight years, and has been accustomed for a number of years to go to England every year to work. Last summer he went to Birmingham and obtained employment, working in the sewers of that city. Shortly after his return home in December last he became ill, and he attributed his illness to the circumstances under which the labour in the sewers was carried on. What a picture the statement suggests! This young fellow, leaving the invigorating breezes blowing over the bogs of his native Roscommon and exchanging its healthy, open-air life for miserable toil in the sewers of a grimy English city; returning home with his modest savings; spending months of weary illness, in bed one day, sitting wearily by the fireside the next; and in the end, while yet an invalid, cast out of the little home erected probably by the labour of his ancestors, at the behest of a gentleman whom the toil of men like him and of women and young girls, too, enables to sit in lordly ease in his Castle of French Park!

The effects of Mrs. Conry having been removed from the house, the emergency men proceeded to bring their furniture and provisions from the transport cart. During the journeys between the cart and the house cries of execration and sarcastic observations were directed towards them by the girls present, and an occasional rush was made at them, as they passed into the house. The girls seemed eager to lay violent hands upon them, but their design was frustrated by the police. A touch of comedy was given to the proceedings when the time came to clear the lands. A goat obstinately resisted the attempts of the bailiffs to drive him off, and they chased him hither and thither to the great enjoy-

ment of the onlookers. Ultimately he took refuge in a cabbage garden, and there they left him. An emergency man was installed in the house, and a force of police detached to protect him.

Leaving Mrs. Conry's the party again took to their cars, and journeyed towards the holding jointly occupied by Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Catherine Moran at Kilrudaune. Mrs. Freeman's house was first visited. It was approached from the main road by a long and winding boreen. There are about six acres in the entire holding, which is evenly divided between the two tenants. The joint rent is £5 4s. 6d. The amount of rent and arrears due up to the 1st of May last was £28 17s. 6d., and the amount of the costs £41 17s. 6d. A month ago Mrs. Freeman's two cows were seized, and were sold by the sheriff at French Park. They were bought in by the friends of the tenant, and realised £13 5s. Mrs. Freeman occupied a substantially built, comfortable-looking, cleanly-kept dwelling, consisting of three good-sized apartments. A zinc-roofed out-office, suitable for the shelter of cattle, was in keeping with the rest of the buildings. How did they come to be erected? Let Mrs. Freeman tell in her own words: "I went and paid a shilling a load for every stone I put in this house. I had only a little clay hut until my little family grew up. They went to America and sent me what helped me to build this house along with their father, and I have it not warm now when I am put out of it." Her daughter completed the story when she said: "Many a load of stones I brought on my back for it."

Mrs. Freeman stated that her husband and one of her boys were working at present in England. Some of the arrears were run-

ning for the past twenty years, and she was willing to pay them off by degrees if the landlord allowed her. She thought she was out of danger after her cows had been seized. A large number of women and girls were assembled near the house when Mr. Flanagan and his party appeared. They groaned the unwelcome visitors vigorously.

Mr. Flanagan approached Mrs. Freeman and said: Any chance of settling?

Mrs. Freeman: You sold my cattle. That ought to go a good way towards settling for a while, until my men earn for me.

Mr. Flanagan: You will get credit for whatever they fetched.

Mrs. Freeman: If one halfpenny bought my land out now I haven't it. You got £13 5s. for my cattle, and I don't know where it went. Of course I can't pay any more at this present time.

Mr. Flanagan indicated that the eviction should proceed, and the bailiffs set themselves to the task of removing the furniture.

Among the articles put out of the house was a cake, whose baking was still unfinished when the eviction party arrived. Mrs. Freeman's mother, an old lady between eighty and ninety years of age, was among the members of the family evicted. Mr. Carter and Mr. Johnston were able to take interesting photographs of a group representing the four generations, extending from Mrs. Freeman's mother down to a little baby in arms, the child of a married daughter. Having completed Mrs. Freeman's eviction and placed an emergency man in occupation, the party proceeded to the residence of Mrs. Moran, close by. She has been a widow for twenty-six years, and part of her house, too, was

built by the money given to her by her daughter, since dead, who earned it in America. She stoutly resisted leaving the house, and was being forcibly removed by the Sheriff when Mr. Carter intervened and gently persuaded her to leave peaceably so as to avoid being hurt. During the process of furnishing Mrs. Freeman's house with stores from the transport cart the assembled women-folk kept up a running fire of adverse comment, directed principally towards Mr. Flanagan and the emergency men, the police, too, coming in for a share of it. Mr. Fitz Gibbon at length advised the people to go to their homes.

Mrs. Moran's eviction was the last for the day. Mr. Flanagan drove back to his residence still escorted by police. Mr. Fitz Gibbon, Mr. Johnston and Mr. Carter were warmly cheered before they took their departure, and were followed by the blessings of the warm-hearted people.

SOME OBSERVATIONS.

I think I have described at sufficient length the evils of the present condition of land tenure in Ireland, and the ease with which these evils might be removed by a complete system of Land Purchase. Nearly every Irishman, landlord or tenant, agrees that Land Purchase is the only remedy.

For centuries we have been trying to govern Ireland and have failed. Neither Coercion nor concessions have succeeded, for the simple reason that the evil is far deeper than either of those methods could remove. At last, however, we have a solution of the difficulty, which Irishmen of all parties agree would pacify the country, and which, so far as it has been tried, has already proved a most gratifying success.

At the same time Englishmen must be content to make some sacrifices, if they are to get rid of the Irish incubus. But that sacrifice will be rather an investment in good government than a permanent gift. We have paid heavily in the past, for the coercion of Ireland. Surely it would be better to continue those payments for a period, in order to buy out the freehold of Irish discontent. We cannot expect to establish peace between landlord and tenant without some cost to ourselves. But that expenditure will be one of the best investments the British Empire has ever made. Our capital would be perfectly safe, and our interest equally sure. We have this on the word of the present Chief Secretary for Ireland.

The investment will be as follows. Between the price at which the Irish landlords can afford to sell their lands, and the price at which the tenants can afford to purchase, so as to be remunerative, there is a margin which has been reckoned at from two to four years rental. It is this margin which England will be asked to make up. Now, according to the report of the commission on the financial relations between England and Ireland, the latter country has paid very considerably more than her share of Imperial taxation. There is thus due to Ireland from this country a sum of money which would more than cover the margin between the selling price of the landlords and the buying price of the tenants. If Englishmen are willing to give that sum they will not only be returning to Ireland money which is legally due to her, but by the pacification of the country which would follow, they will be securing for themselves and the Empire the extinction of the Irish trouble. Let us remember that an end of that trouble means not only a peaceful Ireland, but a better understanding with America, and happier relationships with our Colonies, and every other country to which Irishmen have been driven by our misrule.

Land Purchase, sooner or later, must become universal in Ireland, and perhaps it is not too early to utter a word of warning as to one or two dangers which should be guarded against. One or two landlords and several Unionists, in conversation with me on the subject, urged that if Land Purchase became general in ten years' time the same evils would return, only in a milder form, They say a new race of landlords would arise clever, grasping men, who would buy up the farms and exact the uttermost farthing from the unfortunate tenants.

But what seems to me more probable is the danger that men, who are not dependent upon the land, will endeavour to get hold of it. To some extent this is already true. I heard of a case in which an extensive landlord in the West of Ireland had purchased a large tract of land, under the Ashbourne Act. There is also the danger of the land being sold in large quantities, and of men adding field to field, so that the present congested districts will not be relieved.

To meet these and other dangers I think the Act might be safeguarded as follows:—

(1.) In the congested districts, at least, the extent of a single holding should not exceed £50 value. Many think it should not exceed £25 value.

That in these districts no man should be allowed to purchase more than would make the total value of his holding over £50.

(2). That in case any tenant is unable to continue his payments the number of years should be extended, so that the only effect of arrears will be to prolong the purchasing period.

(3). That the Government, or Local Authorities, should have power to advance money to the tenants in proportion to the value of their holdings, or the amount of their interest in the holdings; but no mortgage should be permitted in any case until the purchase is completed.

(4). That a strict limit should be placed on the sub-division of land.

(5). That in all future sales or transfers of land, which has been originally purchased under an Act of Parliament, the Government or local authorities should have the first option of purchasing at market prices.

(6). That none but bona-fide agricultural tenants, or labourers, should be given the first option of purchasing land under the Act.

(7). That the Commission which values the land shall be so constituted as to gain the confidence of the people,, and its charges shall not be borne by either landlord or tenant.

That the Act shall be administered through County Councils, by a National Commission, composed of representatives of the County Councils, or some other authority, in whom the tenants will have confidence.

(8). That local authorities should have extensive powers to purchase land for public improvements, provision of municipal dwellings, small holdings, etc.

Most of the above suggestions have met with the cordial approval of Irishmen on both sides of the question. I only mention them here, because, to a certain extent, they may meet the objections of those who believe in land nationalisation, and also of those who see nothing but evil in the Government becoming the sole landlord of Ireland.

I should like to suggest that as there has already been several large purchases under the Ashbourne Act, and in some cases sales have been made to men whom the Act was not intended to benefit, that a return be asked for giving the names, addresses and professions of all purchases under the various purchase Acts, the extent of their purchases, and the extent of any other holdings either owned or rented by them.

There are many other aspects of Land Purchase, which will require careful attention, and detailed explanation. But the purpose of what I have written being only for popular use, I do not think it is necessary or desir-

able to enter into details here. Once popular opinion has approved of compulsory purchase, the particulars of the final scheme may safely be left to the representatives of the landlords and tenants. When that day comes we shall have learnt the way in which to unitedly translate into deeds the prayer so long uttered in divided camps, "God save Ireland."

THE END.

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